



TEXT BY SUVI HEINO; PHOTOS BY SARA RIHIAHO; PRODUCED BY PRESSER OY

Raising spirits

Ägräs Distillery is producing drinks with distinctly Nordic flavours, and people are coming from all over the world to see them made

The story of Ägräs Distillery is a very modern one. For one thing, its first step towards becoming a legitimate business was through an online crowd-funding campaign, which was so successful that the company had more than enough to get started.

"There was no need to skimp on machinery. We could afford an automatic distiller, which tripled the production capacity from what we could have made with a manual one," says Susanna Kankare, the distillery's CEO.

Along with funds, the distillery needed a powerful brand, so – another modern solution – Kankare hired global innovation agency PACKLAB to help. It came up with their approach: slick design, a focus on wild herbs, and the name Ägräs, chosen in reference to Finnish mythology, reflecting the brand's heritage.

The man behind the drinks is master distiller Tomi Purhonen, who has an in-depth knowledge of wild herbs, the key components of Ägräs's brand.

"My first thought is about the health benefits of the herbs, and from there I look at the flavours," he explains. The herbs are all locally sourced and picked by hand, while the juniper berries are delivered from the north by a wild-herb merchant.

As well as producing craft gin and aquavit, the new distillery is also involved in tourism. "We take advantage of Fiskars's history and attractions, which bring a great number of tourists every year, and now offer distillery tours," says Kankare.

Visitors can see the workshop and sample the distillery's products. It's also possible to forge a cheese knife or blow your own glass, to take home as a souvenir or holiday gift.

To further the distillery's growth and expansion, Ägräs launched a new crowd-funding campaign in April 2017. After just three weeks, more than 70 percent of the targeted €350,000 had been pledged.

agrasdistillery.com



Tomi Purhonen is the master distiller at Ägräs Distillery. He has an in-depth knowledge about wild herbs, which are used as a main ingredient in the distillery's products





Diversity is key

The secret to business success is hiring a diverse and international team, according to Finnish company Fennovoima's project director Minna Forsström

TEXT BY JASMINE PLAVSIG; PHOTO BY LIISA HUIMA; PRODUCED BY PRESSER OY

Promotion

Standing in the lobby of Fennovoima's Helsinki headquarters, there's a palpable buzz of excitement from the people working there. It's unusual for an office to feel this lively on an average day, but this company's team is made up of people from all over the world who have come to the Finnish capital to do something important.

Fennovoima was established in 2007 and is currently working on building Hanhikivi 1, a nuclear power plant that's undergoing licensing at present. The project, valued between €6.5 and €7 billion, is considered the largest industrial project in Finland and currently employs some 300 domestic and international professionals who all contribute to the energy security of Finland and the entire EU. The actual construction of the plant is set to begin in 2018, and commercial operation in 2024.

"We are a newcomer that has been very successful in creating and managing a vast project of this size. No wonder we have gained so much international attention too," says Minna Forsström, project manager at Fennovoima. Forsström recently visited Beijing, where she met directors from two of the biggest power plants there. "A Fennovoima business card opens many doors," she adds.

Learning of Forsström's credentials, it's clear why she was chosen the head up the Hanhikivi 1 project. As well as working at some of the top companies in her field, she also has a Master's degree in chemical engineering, as well as an MBA.

IMPORTING BRAIN POWER

When it comes to her team, Forsström is passionate about its multicultural makeup. She's keen to encourage international workers, as well as domestic ones. "We recruit highly educated international talents, many of whom have two university degrees. About 20 percent of my team come from abroad, whether that's Germany, Sweden, Britain, Czech Republic, Slovakia, India, Pakistan or Russia. Overall, there are people from 18 nationalities. In my opinion, Fennovoima is number-one in terms of brain import!" she enthuses.

With so many international workers, Fennovoima assists in their relocation, to make the transition as smooth as possible, as it demands a lot from people to relocate to a totally new country and culture. "From helping them find an apartment to sorting out library cards for their children – we want to make it easy," says Forsström.

Finland is known for its excellent education and 30 percent of the nation moves onto higher education, so why does the company look for talent outside the country's borders? Forsström points out that the company benefits from diversity. A physicist educated in Germany is not identical with a Finnish physicist. Moreover, people from different backgrounds have different experiences, which leads to a bigger pool of versatile problem-solving skills within the company.

TALENT ATTRACTS TALENT

Its multiculturalism is not Fennovoima's only nod to diversity. Its teams consist of an almost equal number of male and female, young and more experienced employees. This balance is a reflection of an ongoing fair-recruitment process. The company is set to recruit 200 more engineers and quality assurance professionals in the near future.

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According to Forsström, the culture at Fennovoima is colourful, stable, young and cheerful – less about worrying, more about doing. Nevertheless, safety is extremely important, and all opinions and concerns are taken into consideration. Responsibility is expected, and not just over a staff member's own work. Employees are encouraged to contact the suppliers to ensure the work has proceeded to the next stage. The company's newer recruits especially value this information flow, as it presents them with possibilities to learn from people more experienced than them and in other departments. "With us, you get to work with the best professionals. Where else will you get a high-quality lecture about turbines from a colleague next door?" says Forsström.

fennovoima.fi



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY WALKI OY; PRODUCED BY PRESSER OY

The evolution of a brand

We look at how long-standing Finnish company Walki went from a packaging company to a leading producer of technical laminates

As Finland celebrates its 100th year as an independent nation, the country is taking time to look back at its fascinating journey. Finland's history is closely tied to several companies that have been around for decades. Walki is one of these. Its founder, Rudolf Walden, was instrumental not only in creating an innovative enterprise, but also in creating and shaping the country as a whole.

Walden founded the Paperituote paper plant in the Finnish town of Valkeakoski in 1931. Since then Walki has gone from being one of the first packaging companies in Finland to a leading producer of technical laminates and protective packaging materials, specialising in the production of fibre-based, intelligent, multi-laminate products for markets ranging from energy-saving construction facings and membranes to barrier packaging applications.

According to the company's current CEO Leif Frilund, Walki has never been content with a purely domestic profile. "From very early on, Walki began

internationalising the company. We opened our first plant abroad in Steinfurt, Germany, in 1979," says Frilund. Now Walki has factories in Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, the UK, Russia and China, with a workforce of about 900 people.

The paper industry has been instrumental in putting Finland on the world map. But as globalisation and digitalisation have changed the game, many companies have had to change tack. Finland's technological abilities have come in handy. Today Walki is more of a technology company than anything else, offering innovative products for construction, packaging and the paper-and-board industries.

One thing that hasn't change for Finland or for Walki is the respect they have for nature. "The Finns have always turned to the forest for food and shelter," says Frilund. "Today, sustainability and resource efficiency can be seen in every aspect of the company."

walki.com



"We still need to live in accordance with nature,"
– CEO Leif Frilund

