



Personalized Catering

Cooking Up Something New During COVID-19

The mother-daughter duo of Gwen and Becki is the heart and soul of Personalized Catering. Family owned and operated out of Selkirk, Ontario since May 2017, Personalized Catering is a local community-based service that offers frozen meals as well as catering services. They cater luncheons, dinners, special occasions, and work meetings/events.

The majority of Personalized Catering's revenue came from catering weddings, business meetings, and other large gatherings. When COVID-19 hit in March 2020, they decided to close their doors for two weeks, as per the initial announcement. Then it became clear that things would not be going back to normal after the two-week period. "We put our heads together and decided that everyone loves our lasagna, so

let's start putting it in the freezer," says Becki. That was the beginning of Personalized Catering's line of frozen meals.

In order to make the switch from a catering service to a frozen meal service, Gwen and Becki knew that



they needed to invest into freezers, so they went looking for some financial assistance. "We went to the bank to apply for CEBA, but did not qualify, so our banker directed us to Grand Erie Business Centre. We were able to access the Regional Relief and Recovery Fund, and it was right in our own community," says Becki.

With the RRRF loan, Personalized Catering was able to purchase a new oven and multiple stand-up freezers. They were also able to create a small storefront where guests can come and shop or pick-up their orders at their convenience. While the storefront has been a wonderful addition, the majority of Personalized Catering's clientele prefers the delivery service that they offer throughout Haldimand County.

In addition to the RRRF loan, Personalized Catering also applied for and received a small grant from Grand Erie Business Centre to assist them with increasing their online presence.

They have created a website, which they did not have before, and it has an online store. "Customers can go online to order frozen meals for themselves, or a family member, and we can deliver it right to their door. We also have gift cards available on our online store that can be purchased for new parents, people in quarantine, those who have

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just lost a loved one, etc.," says Becki. Gwen adds, "A lot of learning has taken place. We now have a Google My Business account, we've been participating in webinars, and we've been advertising online."





They recently began providing the frozen meals through Senior Support Services of Haldimand-Norfolk. "Previously, the meals were coming from an out-of-town company, and the seniors really wanted to work with someone local and we know a lot of them. It's worked out really nicely and we can get them their food safely," says Becki. Gwen and Becki enjoy knowing that they're serving the local seniors a quality product, that meets their dietary needs, and that is easy for them, as they just need to put the meal in the oven, heat it up, and it's ready to eat.

For the future, Personalized Catering would like to expand the frozen meals stream of their business. As well, they have started serving hot lunches at one local elementary school and have been

approaching additional schools in hopes of beginning a program in the Fall. As they expand, they would like to invest in a walk-in freezer, which would give them increased capacity to store the frozen meals.



"Grand Erie Business Centre has shown us that they are there to support all small businesses. They are helpful, involved in the community, and have helped us endure the hardship of operating a small business during COVID. If it wasn't for Grand Erie Business Centre we wouldn't be open right now," says Gwen. Becki adds, "We look forward to being able to continue to serve our community meals that they can enjoy under any situation. We just really want to be able to continue to serve."

For more information about **Personalized Catering** visit www.personalizedcatering.ca, or contact 905-741-1395



For more information about **Grand Erie Business Centre** visit www.granderie.com or contact 905-765-5005.

