



Twisted Lemon

reDefining Fine Dining

Mission, passion, humour, and balance. These are the principles which drive the team behind Twisted Lemon Restaurant & Flavour Junkies.

Located in the quaint town of Cayuga in Haldimand County, Twisted Lemon Restaurant is a fine dining establishment that is focused on building a unique experience for guests. Twisted Lemon Restaurant has been owned and operated by husband-and-wife team, Chef Dan Megna and Laurie Lilliman, since 2009. "As a destination restaurant it's our goal to give people more than just coming to a restaurant. It's about more than just food; it's about the environment, the lifestyle, and the care, love and passion in the ingredients, as much as it is about connecting with people directly on a personal level. We hope they feel that when they come here they're getting something special and they're feeling

as welcomed as they would in someone's home," says Chef Dan Megna.

Today, Twisted Lemon Restaurant is well-known throughout Southern Ontario, but it was not always that way. "We had a large hill to climb when we opened a fine dining restaurant in a very small town, in a small community



like Haldimand County," says Chef Dan Megna. Since opening, Twisted Lemon Restaurant has won multiple tourism awards, not just in the local community, but throughout Southern Ontario, and has become a destination, with 70% of Twisted Lemon's guests travelling 40 minutes or longer to come to the restaurant. Chef Dan and Laurie believe that they are giving their guests a glimpse into what the community has to offer, and an experience that makes them want to come back and enjoy more throughout the County.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Chef Dan and Laurie believed that it was not going to be short-term. They also knew that they were not a take-out restaurant, and since most of their clientele travelled more than 40 minutes to visit them, they could not be a take-out restaurant. "Our business is a very difficult one to survive in at the best of times and during this pandemic, the restaurant and hospitality industry has been hit with a lot of harsh restrictions," Megna says.



Believing that this would be for the long-haul, Dan and Laurie worked with Grand Erie Business Centre. Grand Erie Business Centre was the obvious choice for them as they had assisted Dan and Laurie in 2008 with the initial capital that was used to build and open the restaurant. Speaking of the initial loan Dan says, "We went to Grand Erie

"They've always been there to listen to us as people and a business, and we know we're dealing with people who care about the community"



Business Centre because my wife and I, as seasoned restaurateurs, understand how difficult it is for restaurants, especially small restaurants, to get loans." When the pandemic hit "Grand Erie Business Centre was there and helped us to acquire grants and funding, and they made the process very easy. They've always been there to listen to us as people and a business, and we know we're dealing with people who care about the community, our small business, and all of the small businesses in the community," he says. "We didn't have to reach out to them, they reached out to us. The moment there was an opportunity for them to be able to help, they came to us first, which is part of the reason why the relationship has been so strong and



why we would have no reason to consider funding from someone else."

With the assistance of Grand Erie Business Centre, Twisted Lemon Restaurant has been able to overcome the effects that COVID-19 has brought to their business. Chef Dan credits a number of reasons for their success. First and foremost, he credits the local support and many long-term relationships that they've had from the community. Next, he credits the incredible team that they have working with them, most who have been with them from the beginning, 13 years ago. "Any decisions that we've made as a business to put our best foot forward during the pandemic, they've always been there and said 'Whatever you need, we are here; we understand and we'll get through this together'."

With their community and team behind them, and facing extraordinary restrictions, Twisted Lemon Restaurant

knew they would have to do something different. In April 2020, just a few weeks after the pandemic hit, Dan and Laurie, created their "Take and Bake Program". This program was designed specifically to offer their clientele the delicious, well-prepared food that they expected, without having to do 90% of the work. "You can warm it and finish it at your leisure so that you can travel to get it and take it home. It comes with all of the finishing instructions, all of the fun little garnishes, all of the extra flavours that we put our time and effort into, and you get to enjoy it hot, the way you're supposed to," says Chef Dan.

In addition to the success of the "Take and Bake Program", Laurie has created a line of clarified, unruffled cocktails named Clarity Cocktails. These cocktails are complex, proper cocktails that are made through a clarifying process that allows them to be bottled and have a shelf-life. Currently, there are 18 different flavours available. They are also forging strong relationships with other small businesses, such as Concession Road Brewing Co., which is the only beer that has been sold by Twisted Lemon Restaurant since the pandemic hit. "Like-minded local businesses working together".

Looking to the future, Dan and Laurie cannot wait to be able to host people in the dining room once again, and be able to offer all of the little extras that is synonymous with the Twisted Lemon Restaurant dining experience. They

have also been working on converting the upper floor of the restaurant to a three-room inn. Dan states, "We would like to increase the level of experience and service that we offer by giving our guests rooms to stay over."

"We wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for the relationships that we've built with staff and with our community," says Chef Dan. "Surviving has been possible by working with Grand Erie Business Centre, our staff, our relationships in the community, and the connections that we have with other local small businesses. These relationships are more relevant now than ever before."

For more information about **Twisted Lemon Restaurant** visit www.twistedlemon.ca, or contact 905-772-6636.



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

