

Changing Seasons

By Christine Peets

After more than 30 years in business, with 20 of them being in the food industry, as a professional chef, food co-op organizer, restaurateur, and culinary professor, Pat Forster is ready for a change, as she continues to look for new ways to fuel her passion for food.

She opened Seasons Fine Foods & Cookery School in 2008 in Downtown Napanee. When she had the opportunity to become a Culinary Arts professor at Loyalist College in Belleville, she closed Seasons for a few years. In 2014, she re-opened Seasons but this time, with a much bigger location.

“I wanted to stay in Downtown Napanee, and I finally had the space to do everything I wanted to do: operate a fine foods shop, offer catering, and run my own cooking school,” Pat said. “It was perfect, but it’s been a lot of work. I was finding it all a bit too much, and I want some time to travel and spend more time with my family.”

She knew she’d have to make the change gradually, and felt lucky to have met Joseph Imre and his wife Jazmin Bansagi last summer. They had moved to the area a few years ago and were looking for a way to follow their passion for cooking and working with unique foods that could be sourced locally as much as possible. They were also looking for a healthier lifestyle.

Joseph said that he and Jazmin had made a New Year’s resolution, gone right. “We’ve been on a mission to eat healthier foods, and work with local farmers and producers, and since our previous careers in Ottawa and Toronto often meant working long hours away from each other, this opportunity provided us with a way to work together.”

Jazmin added that with their Eastern European backgrounds, they were used to eating heavier meals, and they were looking for a way to add more vegetables and lighter fare. They always found what they needed at Seasons and started spending many hours chatting with Pat when they were in the Napanee area on weekends at their farm property in Enterprise. After many conversations, Pat knew she’d found the right people to take over her business.

Joseph said that Pat has treated him and Jazmin like they were part of her family, and with them becoming the new owners of Seasons, he said that they feel like they will be able to carry on Pat’s legacy and develop closer ties to the Napanee business and farm community.

The transition took place on June 1. Joseph and Jazmin are running the shop, doing the catering, and preparing the fresh sandwiches, salads, soups, baked goods, and frozen meals—all of the things that continue to bring customers to Seasons, which received the 2017 Business of the Year Award from the Napanee BIA.

“This [finding new owners for the shop] is like it was meant to be. I had hoped for someone to take over Seasons and allow me continue with the cooking classes, and they were looking for something that would help them meet their new goals,” Pat said. “It just felt right. Now I can stay involved in this industry that I love.”

When re-opening Seasons, Pat said that she wanted to provide Downtown Napanee with a grocery store, but one that offered unique products that might not be found elsewhere. She also wanted to carry a line of fresh and frozen gluten-free foods, from suppliers that may not have their products in other stores. Joseph and Jazmin will be carrying on this tradition, and they have a vision of how Seasons will evolve.

“Since purchasing our farm, we know how hard farmers work, and how difficult it can be for them to find the right markets for their products,” Jazmin said. “We want to work with local producers to provide an outlet, and have more farm-to-table items for sale.”

It’s been a steep learning curve for Jazmin and Joseph and they are very appreciative of Pat’s guidance and training, which helped to make the transition a smooth one. They look forward to welcoming all of Seasons current and future customers.

A special Open House is being planned for July 28 in the height of the growing season when Jazmin will have an abundance of fresh fruit, vegetables, plants and other goods in store. There will be plenty of surprises, and, of course, the special ice cream from Kawartha Dairy is always a big hit in the summer. Pat said that cooking classes will begin again in August, taught by her and other chefs from the area.

“Jazmin, Joseph, and Chef Pat are thrilled that Seasons lives on.”

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