

BUSINESS

EDIC HELPS CHRISTOPHER'S COOK UP SUCCESS

BY DAILY ITEM STAFF | October 30, 2017



Christopher's Cafe owner David Shalvoy and one of the restaurant's employees, Lesley Brewer. (Courtesy Photo)

David Shalvoy knows the ins and outs of running a restaurant, having operated a successful one in Boston's South End for 12 years before opening his Lynn cafe in 2008, at the site of the former Stone Bakery. He has since added catering to the menu of what he offers from his Diamond District location, which has also become a gathering place for a loyal clientele.

“There’s a clubhouse atmosphere,” Shalvoy said, sitting at a table in Christopher’s Café on Lewis Street near the Swampscott line. “I know 90 percent of my customers.” Judging by the din of conversation between tables, a lot of them clearly get to know each other as well.

Shalvoy, who moved to Lynn 15 years ago, has expanded the seating at Christopher’s from 19 when he opened to 42. In good weather, there is room for an additional 20 people outside. The catering business, which he started in 2016, is also growing.

Shalvoy is also in the process of buying the building in which he has been a tenant for nine years. He said a \$50,000 loan from the Economic Development & Industrial Corporation of Lynn (EDIC/Lynn) was a major boost to his expansion plans.

“I am getting maximum use out of the loan,” said Shalvoy, who used the money for kitchen equipment, a heating and air conditioning system, fire-suppression system and other capital expenses. “EDIC supports local businesses. They helped me modify my business plan.”

“Christopher’s is the type of establishment that adds to the fabric of the community,” said EDIC/Lynn Executive Director James M. Cowdell. “David has created a place where people can enjoy not only quality food, but also companionship and conversation. We were happy to help him grow his business.”

Christopher’s serves breakfast and lunch and is open from 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on the weekend. Delivery and orders to go are also offered. Service keeps a brisk pace, but if you’re looking for fast food, look elsewhere. Each plate is cooked fresh to order, and there can also be a line out the door at brunch hour on a weekend.

“We emphasize fresh, quality, made-to-order meals,” said Shalvoy, who has six employees at Christopher’s. “We don’t do the 10-minute breakfast.”

More time for loyal customers such as Gary and Ann Robinson to enjoy each other’s company.

The café also displays the work of local artists in rolling exhibits throughout the year. Next up will be Erik Eskedal, whose photography recently showed at the State House.

Shalvoy recalls some lean years as a new venture in Lynn. “We’d stand around in this empty shop for a few days at a time,” he said. Curious neighbors began to peek inside, and word about Christopher’s eventually spread both in Lynn and surrounding areas on the North Shore.

“I even have a regular bunch of Bostonians who bike up for lunch,” said Shalvoy.

He expects his sales to increase by as much as 30 percent from this year to 2019. The catering business is already playing a leading role in that growth.

“We offer a personalized, customized menu,” he said. “I go into every job thinking it’s going to be the hardest job I’ve ever had. If you go in thinking it will be easy, you let your guard down and that’s when the quality suffers.”

In Boston, Shalvoy prepared meals for Boston Public Schools and functions at the Parkman House, the mayor's official reception hall. Since coming to Lynn, he has cooked for a variety of nonprofits including the Lynn Business Education Foundation, Shoe City Lions, the YMCA and Family & Children's Service, and he hosts many fundraisers on site.