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NEW COMMERCIAL KITCHEN, CAFE AND EVENT SPACE TO COME AT THE LYDIA PINKHAM BUILDING IN LYNN

BY GAYLA CAWLEY | March 31, 2019



Michelle Mulford, left, and Marianne Staniunas are organizing the new space of Uncommon Feasts at the Lydia Pinkham Building. (Spenser R. Hasak)

LYNN — Michelle Mulford has spent the last 14 years working her way up through every aspect of the food business. Now, she's bringing her catering company Uncommon Feasts to Lynn.

With unanimous approval from the City Council last week, Mulford and her business partner, Marianne Staniunas, plan to open a commercial kitchen, cafe and event space at the Lydia Pinkham Building.

"Our business just continued to grow and we needed our own space," Mulford said. "We've been hearing really great things about Lynn, looked at the Lydia Pinkham Building and immediately fell in love with it. It seemed like a really good fit."

The small-business owner said her career in food started in restaurants and other people's catering companies, along with stints working as a personal chef to actors and directors. By 2014, she decided to strike out on her own in the catering world with Uncommon Feasts.

Four years later, the business had grown to the point that Mulford needed help. That's when she partnered with Staniunas. The two met at the South End's Formaggio Kitchen, where Staniunas was Mulford's boss. Staniunas had decided to leave a career in corporate law to pursue her passion in the food, wine and beer industry.

Today, Uncommon Feasts has expanded its client base so much that it has outgrown its current shared kitchen space in Acton. The catering company quadrupled its business last year and is on pace to do the same this year, according to Mulford.

The business partners have leased out 2,100 square feet of space in the Pinkham building. Mulford said they wouldn't have been able to make significant renovations to the space and cover other start-up fees without a \$120,000 small-business loan from the Lynn Municipal Finance Corporation.

That loan covered half of their fees, with the pair funding the other half privately, according to Mulford.

James Cowdell, Economic Development & Industrial Corporation of Lynn executive director, is the director of the mayor-appointed board, which provides low interest loans to both new and existing businesses and encourages small-business investment in designated areas.

"We believe in them," Cowdell said. "We believe that they're going to be very, very successful. It's going to create jobs. We're excited about what's going on inside the Lydia Pinkham Building. There's a lot of businesses and a lot we've been able to start up there."

At first, Mulford said they were only looking to create a commercial kitchen in the space, but saw that it would be good for events and a cafe.

Their catering business has become known for serving food and drinks on pieces made by local artists in Salem and Lowell, and “benefiting from New England’s abundance of organically-grown produce, and meat and fish from responsibly raised and sourced animals,” according to the company’s website.

“We know who’s growing our food and I think that really resonates with people,” Mulford said.

The cafe is a first for Uncommon Feasts, and would bear the company’s name. Coffee and Mulford’s own chai blend will be served, with the latter blended by a local spice company. In addition, the menu will include juices and breakfast and lunch items.

It’s an exciting time for the business partners, as their projected mid-April opening in Lynn will come right after one of the biggest catering events they’re ever scheduled, which will be on a pier in Boston’s Seaport, according to Mulford.



Gayla Cawley

Gayla Cawley joined The Daily Item as a reporter in 2015. She spent previous stints writing for several other publications in Connecticut and New York. The University of Connecticut graduate studied English and Journalism. Follow her on Twitter [@GaylaCawley](https://twitter.com/GaylaCawley).

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