



Linda McCormick has opened Item Cafe on the first floor of the former Daily Evening Item building. (Spenser Hasak)

Hot (or cold) off the presses: Item Cafe opens its doors on Exchange Street

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“This is great for the community.” “Can’t recommend enough!” “Definitely our new go-to spot!” These are some examples of what customers at the newly

opened Item Cafe had to say about the spot, which is located at 38 Exchange St. Lynnfield native Linda McCormick said she has a passion for excellent coffee and quality foods, and she has brought that to Lynn with her “brainchild.”

Her culinary curiosity started with her first trip to Italy when she was younger, a place where she later lived for a brief period of time. She explored the cities of Florence, Venice, and Naples, and said the pronounced flavors of the food she ate in Italy inspired her.

Before opening the cafe, McCormick had a number of odd jobs, and also worked at Mass General Hospital and Boston Children’s Hospital for 24 years in total. A single mother, she decided to work full time to have a secure way of life while raising her son, Colin. As a result, she was never able to go all in with a venture of this caliber, although she was asked by people to cook meals for them, host parties, and did a little bit of catering on the side.

With her son now in college, she felt inspired to take a leap of faith and embark on her entrepreneurial journey by opening her first business with the support from her sister Andrea and partner, Daniel.

“I wanted to show (Colin) that at any age, you can follow a passion or be an entrepreneur,” McCormick said.

Speaking of her son, a figure popping out of a cupcake can be seen on the cafe’s logo. The inspiration behind that figure is none other than Colin.

“There’s two pictures of him... one as a baby, and one when he was traveling in Spain, and I swear if you put the two pictures over each other, it’s exactly that,” McCormick said. “I would always make cupcakes for him growing up. I said, ‘Oh, if I won the lottery, I’d do a food truck, or Colin’s Cupcakes,’ but then I moved here to this building and I saw the space and I saw what’s happening in the neighborhood, and I just thought, ‘God, what a perfect space for a coffee shop.’”



McCormick prepares a chocolate cappuccino for a customer. Since recently opening her business, McCormick acknowledged that she has faced challenges, yet she believes the hurdles are what make the journey worthwhile.

“What I didn’t realize is that at age 50, going from a desk job to a service job where you’re on your feet all day, I mean it’s just hard work, it’s generally hard

work,” McCormick said. “But I will say, every single day I’ve had people come in that have made it worth it with what they say and how supportive they are and just how much they’ve enjoyed a pastry or the coffee, and so you just reset and you know you’re ready to tackle it again.”

Located near other businesses offering similar products, McCormick feels confident that the cafe’s location will foster a vibrant community rather than create competition.

“What I love about what’s happening with small businesses around here is that they’re so supportive,” McCormick said. “My thoughts of what I wanted to do and bring to this neighborhood so organically was different from the other small businesses here and I definitely think that even in six months time, there’s going to be enough people to support all of us really well.”

The cafe’s name was inspired by the building’s history and pays homage to the legacy of what existed there years before. People entering the building are greeted by photographs hung on the walls from the early 1900s in the hallway. They display the building during that time period, men operating a printing press, one of the building’s spaces functioning as a bank, and a glimpse of the newsroom that once housed *The Daily Item*, which is now the beautiful, bright space occupied by McCormick’s cafe. Also framed on the wall inside the cafe is a large print of the front page of an 1986 edition of *The Item*.

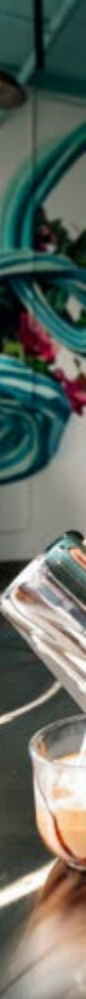


“It is very powerful to look at those pictures in the hallway and then come into this space and realize that the vault is the same vault that’s in the pictures out there,” McCormick said. “You really are a part of history by being in this building. It’s almost, to me, not ghost-like, but I can almost feel or appreciate that there were people here working in a very different venue, but it’s very powerful to me to be able to visualize that with those pictures out there.”



Lynn artist Michael Aghahowa painted the mural along the back wall of the Item Cafe. The cafe is bright, inviting, and radiates cozy vibes. A mural on one of the cafe's walls, which was painted by Lynn artist Michael Aghahowa, beautifully enhances the atmosphere. Swirls of frosting flow across the wall like waves, and beach flowers wrap around the frosting, reminding McCormick of the flowers at Nahant Beach, where her father used to bring her as a child. The beach flowers serve as a heartfelt tribute to her father, William Formosi — better known to many as Mr. Formosi — who dedicated 36 years of his life to teaching at Pickering Middle School.

“A woman came in and I just happened to mention that and she said, ‘Oh my god, your dad taught with my husband,’” McCormick said. “There’s a lot of people that I’ll probably make that connection with and I love it because they can tell me something about my dad.”



When it comes to the cafe's food and drinks, McCormick aims to provide healthy and vegetarian options to the neighborhood, including sandwiches, a variety of coffees and teas, special drinks such as the Iced Northwestern and Goji Crush, and pastries if you're craving something sweet. While McCormick bakes fresh pastries in-house, she also partners with Bova's Bakery in the North End to offer an exceptional selection of treats. The cafe also sources its coffee from Six Depot, a renowned roastery based in West Stockbridge. As far as customers' favorites go, it seems that the Dolce Vita is at the top of the list.

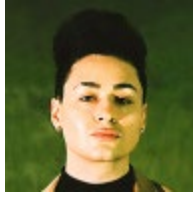
"I'm almost scared to not have it on the menu ever because I've sold so many already, but it's a drink that people come back for," McCormick said. "It's just so funny because I never thought when I was creating an oat-milk drink that it was gonna take off the way it did."

McCormick also said she is open to baking food from any cuisine. If there's a pastry from a specific culture that a customer enjoys, she is willing to learn more about it and try baking it, or sourcing it from a place that makes it the

best. She aims to create an environment where everyone feels welcomed and leaves with a positive memory.

“I’ve met some of the kindest, most supportive, helpful people in just the short time that I’ve been building this and they’ve been incredibly encouraging, and I think that says a lot about this city and the people that are here and the people that are coming in. I think this space in particular, I hope, is a place that people will see the benefit of both old and new,” McCormick said. “It’s small businesses and people like me who are really hoping to take a chance on a city that has a ton of potential. Not to change it and wipe what’s here out, but to just work within it and bring and expose people to new things.”





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