

Restaurants change menus, service to stay open for delivery and pickup amid COVID-19

When they opened up their new restaurant in Aurora's downtown core last year, Romy and Natasha Jolly were pleased to bring a new culinary experience to the community with Romy's Restaurant & Lounge.

But, when COVID-19 became our new normal for the time being, it upended their business plans, along with those of countless other restaurants in the community. And, like many of those struggling to stay afloat at this difficult time, they have deployed some creative thinking to stay open and continue satisfying local taste buds.

They have had to let go all but a skeleton staff and shut down their dining room and now they are focused on a takeout service with curbside delivery.

"The whole thing has been a challenge," says Natasha. "We're not letting anyone else into the building, so when we're doing curbside, I will bring out the food and put it directly into their cars. Our customers are very pleased."

Within every challenge is a silver lining and since they put a sign outside of their Yonge Street frontage to promote their new takeout and curbside options, they have brought in a few new customers. Natasha also says the public has been especially friendly and accommodating as they try to stay afloat in the crisis.

"Everybody has been very nice and supportive," she says. "They are trying to help us and there has been really good feedback from everyone."

"I see a change in attitude? these people were probably nice anyway, but sometimes the general public is in a rush, they want everything right away, and we're not hearing that anymore," she adds with a slight chuckle.

That chuckle fades to a cracked voice, however, when asked what she would say to potential customers who might want to try something new and support local business but, at the same time, are mindful of recommendations to stay indoors unless absolutely necessary.

"Without the help of the community, I think some of the businesses might not be able to open again, so if you can help out and you feel comfortable, it is a great thing to do for your community," she says. "The food industry is a hard business and if you can help out, it is helping put food on the table for families with a small mom-and-pop shop, to at least help pay their bills as they get through this."

?We are going to hang in for as long as we can. We want to be open again and we don't want to give up. We're just trying to stay positive and if they can support locally it makes a difference in someone's livelihood in the future.?

To access Romy's takeout menu, visit [romys.ca](#). For more restaurant options offering pickup and delivery service, visit [shopfromhomeaurora.ca](#) and [safefood.delivery](#).

By Brock Weir