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### A piece of the pie

By Kristen Smith

TORONTO—Selling five-inch pies from a walk-up window off Queen Elizabeth Boulevard wasn't the original plan when Patrick Blessing took over a back portion of a site at 935 The Queensway for The Pie Commission.

The site was supposed to be a production facility of savoury pies for a downtown foodservice operation and, when an appropriate location is found, Blessing will still put the idea into action. For now, the 2,500-square-foot kitchen and production space – a former prep kitchen for a west-end Max's Market location – doubles as the solo foodservice outlet with a lower-level walkout, facing an industrial area.



Blessing told *ORN* he was amazed people found the shop so quickly. He opened in early August and had steady patronage in the first week. "I ask every customer 'How did you find us?'" Many just happen to be driving by," he said.

Blessing and co-owner Mike Dahm brought Owen Sokoloski on board as chef for the focused menu of five pies.

The Pie Commission offers braised beef rib, beef and beer, butter chicken, chicken and cheddar mash and kale pies with an all-butter crust as a combo with salad and fries for \$8.50 or in a handheld sleeve for \$6.95.

"The Pie lends itself to so many different ethnicities and so many different foods; anything that is slightly saucy," said Blessing.

He plans to add more creations over time and offer seasonal pies of the month and expand the salad choices.

Blessing, who has a background in investment banking, made the leap into foodservice with Dahm after seeing a market for high-quality convenience foods. The Pie Commission is modelled after British and Australian pie

shops – of which Blessing and Dahm are fans – and adapted for the Toronto market.

“I’ve always had a love of pies and I’ve always wanted to start a business,” Blessing said.

He notes that pies are not something most individuals can whip up from scratch in under an hour at home.

Blessing visits the Ontario Food Terminal three times a week and Sokoloski makes everything, including the stock, in house.

“It’s quite a labourious process, making these pies,” said Blessing.

He estimates about 65 per cent of customers are seeking hot pies and 35 are looking for a frozen one to pop in the oven later.

“Pie is one of those foods that is easily transportable,” said Blessing.

Mississauga-based Zebra Paper made a foldable sleeve, which turns the individual pie into a handheld food. “In my opinion, it’s the ultimate convenience food,” said Blessing.

He said he takes the food and business seriously, but with a mustached logo and “Bloody good pie” tagline, The Pie Commission owners are out to have some fun with the brand.

Future plans include selling gluten-free, vegetarian pies to natural food stores for retail and opening a downtown location as soon as the right spot – high pedestrian traffic and 500 square feet – becomes available in the core. He said once a location is nailed down it would take between three and six months to open.

Blessing said he hopes to expand even more in the next three to five years.

935 The Queensway, Toronto.

(416) 848-7424, [Piecommission.com](http://Piecommission.com), [@PieCommish](https://twitter.com/PieCommish).

## Comments

1 comments



AC

Good for you! See you next Tuesday! Seriously, I can't wait to drop by and sample your savory pies! Congratulations!

Name:

Email: