



The Difference Baker

The Difference Baker is a certified gluten, peanut, tree nut, soy, fish and crustacean- free bakery, bistro and shared kitchen space. The business was founded by Alyssa Sobecki, who suffered her entire life with food allergies and has children that have struggled with many as well. She wanted to bring a safe dining experience to the local area. A true passion project, it took only five months from concept to launch for Ms. Sobecki to bring The Difference Baker to fruition.

The Challenge

Early in the development of her business, Alyssa sought to better understand the requirements and other considerations she should have to build the allergen-free shared kitchen space and bakery. She reached out to the owners of ChefScape, another local restaurant and shared kitchen concept. They pointed her in the direction of the Loudoun SBDC and Eric Byrd, Manager.

Working with Loudoun SBDC

The initial meeting with Eric was brief, but then had a follow up meeting that was more involved. Acquiring and opening a shared kitchen space was an involved process, including permits, licensing and other regulations. "Eric put me in touch with many people within the county and the health department," she says. "He facilitated much of that process, making it so much easier for me to navigate it all."

Alyssa says working with the SBDC early on in the process was "amazing". The SBDC directed us to the right people on the county board, to better understand and set up our business for success before we even had our architectural drawings.

The Results

"As a result of working with the SBDC, we were prepared and able to pass all our inspections the first time," says Alyssa. The Difference Baker was launched to much success. Although Alyssa and Eric check in with each other from time to time, the initial business guidance enabled the business to open quickly and to thrive.

Although the business opened right before the COVID-19 pandemic, they haven't missed a beat. They immediately pivoted the business model from in-person to online ordering, updating their website in the process. They also enhanced delivery, added multiple pickup locations, and partnered with Loudoun Go, who was doing further deliveries on Saturdays. They are now open to the public for walk in while still supporting the comfort levels of all, with online orders and curbside pick up.

Alyssa recommends the SBDC for new businesses. She says, "Definitely make it your first stop. People ask me this question all the time and I send them to the SBDC every single time." Meeting with the SBDC first is a game-changer because you are well prepared for what's coming."