

## Fusilli Story

Giuseppe Peligna is the owner of Fusilli and came to Canada in 1983. He was born in Canada but had grown up in Sicily. While living in Sicily he had specialized growing vineyards, however his uncle owned a restaurant two doors down where he had lived. Through this learned a lot about the restaurant business. He learned to use good, simple, fresh ingredients in the kitchen and that this would lead to a successful business.

When he started working in the restaurant business in Canada he worked as a dishwasher, despite having restaurant experience because he wanted to see how the business was like in Canada first. This was important he was not familiar with many famous dishes in Canada, such as spaghetti meatballs, because in Italy this dish did not exist. At the same time, he was learning English as his second language.

In 1988 Giuseppe and his wife decided to buy a building in Corktown and open a restaurant downstairs while living on the top floor. The establishment has been open for 32 years and survived many changes in the neighbourhood, including the pandemic. They have renovated the establishment five times in order to stay up to date and modern. The name Fusilli was chosen because it is a famous pasta and an easy name to remember. They promoted themselves mostly through word of mouth as social media did not exist at the time.

When the establishment opened in 1988, they had George Brown college acting school and film production companies, like the CBC, in close proximity. This allowed for a steady clientele, and to this day some customers still visit the restaurant. Earlier in the businesses history they had mostly lunch customers, yet over the years have experienced more customers coming in for dinner.

When the establishment first opened, they did not have a menu, rather they had boards posted with their offerings. Appetizers usually included caesar salad, mix caprese salad, and some soups that were made daily. They had also about four or five different pasta offerings, and two to three meat and fish offerings. About 10 years ago Fusilli added pizza to their menu and they noticed an increase in younger customers because it is a fun and easy dish to eat.

Giuseppe went to Sicily in 2019 to find an olive oil distributor that would export their goods to Fusilli. In addition, he also met a man that made chocolate from scratch and also a pasta distributor that made pasta from wheat that was around in the 1700s. Giuseppe also brought back to Canada sundried tomato from his village. Most of the ingredients used at Fusilli are imported, such as the tomatoes Giuseppe buys are from a Canadian company but grown in Italy. Vegetables and meat are the only local ingredient that is used at Fusilli.

The owner has received offers to expand his business, but it never crossed his mind to do so as he enjoys the restaurant being his own little thing. His goal was not to make millions, but enough to provide for his family and be happy doing what he loves.

To help survive the ongoing pandemic the establishment has opened a patio in their driveway, which Giuseppe states has been a success. They have also created special events, such as cocktail night with pairing food, to help attract customers during this time. The establishment relied on take-out the first few weeks that the government ordered a provincial wide lockdown. Giuseppe does not plan to retire anytime soon as he believes working keeps him young!