



TWISTS & TURNS

D.C. performing arts groups face a difficult dance as Covid repercussions persist

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SMALL BIZ SPOTLIGHT

Featuring small businesses in the region and how they're pivoting through the pandemic

1310 KITCHEN & BAR AND JENN'S HOMEMADE

► **About the business:** A Georgetown neighborhood restaurant, wine and cocktail bar, 1310 Kitchen & Bar features a menu of American classics made from locally sourced ingredients. Jenn's Homemade is a growing pandemic offshoot.

► **How it started:** Hotel owner Nayan Patel was looking for someone to take the helm of 1310 Kitchen & Bar, the restaurant that replaced the Daily Grill inside the Georgetown Inn, in February 2018. He turned to Jenn Crovato, then a 42-year-old single mother he'd worked well with in the past, though Crovato thought she was coming on board temporarily as a consultant.

Crovato, who trained under Galileo chef Roberto Donna, made the 175-seat establishment her own, offering breakfast, lunch, dinner, weekend brunch and bar service, all with her distinctive stamp on cooking and accented by photographs of female rock stars as a tribute to those women who've had to work harder to succeed in male-dominated fields. The granddaughter of a professional baker did such a good job running the place that Patel offered her ownership of the restaurant in September 2019.



1310 KITCHEN & BAR

Jenn Crovato turned to frozen meals to help sustain 1310 Kitchen & Bar in Georgetown. It did more than just put food on the table.

► **The pandemic effect:** Six months later, public health restrictions meant to slow the spread of the coronavirus sent her industry into a tailspin. Forced to shutter at first, Crovato eventually reopened the restaurant a few days a week, but it took until March before it could open seven days a week.

► **The pandemic pivot:** In the interim, she launched a fundraiser, selling frozen, ready-to-bake chicken pot pies to benefit Georgetown Main Street, which had helped keep her own business afloat with a grant earlier in the pandemic. To say people were hungry for those pies is an understatement.

"I could barely keep up with all the orders," she said. "We sold over 500, and we only had a sign up for two weeks. We donated \$5,000 to Georgetown Main Street."

Jenn's Homemade was born. The offshoot helped keep the restaurant going until it reopened in April 2021, and kept her own employees from going hungry. Crovato added dishes to the menu including penne with lamb ragu, chicken enchiladas, eggplant parmesan, even moussaka.

Customers can order the frozen

meals in advance for pick up at 1310 Kitchen, buy a limited number of options at the Organic Butcher of McLean, or find them for sale at farmers markets in the Palisades, Rose Park, and Half Street SE. Jenn's Homemade is churning out 1,300 units a month, up from about 224 units a month at this point a year ago.

► **The challenge today:** Predicting ebbs and flows. That was easier to do before the pandemic, when you could count on business slowing down at points after Memorial Day, when a fair portion of D.C. residents clear out of town for the summer, and busier at points like after Labor Day. These days, with so many still working from home, business picks up at times when it should be slow, and vice versa.

► **What's next:** Taking Jenn's Homemade on the road. Crovato is getting ready to launch an e-bike delivery service, which she says should help boost sales and make it easier for prospective customers not able to make it to her Georgetown restaurant or one of the outposts where the frozen meals are served. Crovato is also working to have the meals delivered through DoorDash Drive, a new service from the online delivery service that will ship its meals out to customers for a flat fee.

— Daniel J. Semovitz

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