

Case study:
Enterprise Renewal
Business Grant

Region
Wrexham

Sector
Food and drink

Project value
£8,102

MAPLE GREEN FINE FOODS

Investment in new equipment has helped an innovative pizza maker boost production and future-proof their business.

Successful small companies have to keep adapting. They need to roll with the punches and seize every opportunity to stay ahead of the game.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit Phil Kalkwarf and wife Helen of Maple Green Fine Foods were running a thriving coffee shop and bistro in Holt. For almost a year they had to rely on the takeaway trade and discovered their most popular offering was pizza.

They were making so many that ever-resourceful Phil developed a method of making pizza bases in advance and storing them in bags in the fridge. When an order came along he simply cut open the bag, added cheese and sauce and put the pizza in the oven to cook. Phil realised he was onto something big.

Pretty soon, as Wedoughtit4u, they were supplying pizza-making kits straight to families at home still trapped in lockdown. "It was restaurant-quality hand-stretched pizza that puffed up perfectly," says Phil. "We got 5,000 boxes made, put it out on social media and business went crazy overnight. We were sending pizzas to Scotland, the Isle of Man, London, even to France and Italy.

"Then the pandemic started easing and people didn't want pizza at home anymore – they wanted to go out. We needed to adapt again and work out how to keep the product moving."

The answer was a shift away from the consumer market towards the hospitality sector. Restaurants and pubs, hotels and casinos, student kitchens, office canteens, theme parks and cruise ships – they all wanted to offer their own no-fuss pizzas.

Instead of sending out one pizza at a time Phil was supplying boxes of 30 bases, four kilos of cheese and three kilos of their home-made sauce. Suddenly the company was striving to cope with a peak demand of 2,500 pizzas a week and a shortage of space at their coffee shop.

Thanks to an Enterprise Renewal grant they invested in a new heavy-duty mixer capable of working 10 kilos of dough at a time, extra stainless steel tables, an additional pizza roller and a huge stick blender to mix the pizza sauce. They also created a dedicated space for packing and sauce-making.

"The grant meant we could vastly increase our production," says Phil. "It's helped us to future-proof the business and made us realise how we needed to operate. It's been so successful we're now moving to bigger premises to put all our focus on the pizzas."

