

South Memphis

OtherFoods Kitchen helps startups cook up something great in Memphis

RAMONA SPRINGFIELD | THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 2020



OtherFoods Kitchen is located at 1249 Heistan Place and serves as a space for food-based startups to kickoff. (Ramona Springfield)



Delicious aromas beckon from the doorway of OtherFoods Kitchen.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the 3,000 square-foot commercial kitchen housed 23 startup, food-based businesses in the shared facility at the eastern edge of South Memphis.

"In this space they prepare, they cook, they package, and they deliver," said Steve Cantor, co-CEO of OtherFoods.

Co-CEO Evan Katz said that post-COVID, there are fewer member businesses working in the kitchen but many of those who are still there are busier than ever.

"... for some it's actual been a drastic increase in demand, especially if they have a food delivery-based business," said Katz.

In response to the pandemic, OtherFoods launched a Memphis Pantry Box to help all its co-workers sustain their companies. The boxes offer a mix of their products.

"We started the Memphis Pantry Box to help groups in our kitchen and other local producers that lost selling channels due to the pandemic," said Katz.

OtherFoods has sold around 80 Memphis Pantry boxes so far, but there's still plenty of inventory left. Katz encouraged Memphians to support these new businesses that are trying to establish themselves during a global crisis. [Click here](#) for more information or to sign up for a Memphis Pantry Box.

"We've been really excited to see so many Memphians interested in supporting local vendors this way, and we keep getting new orders every day," said Katz.

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THE KITCHEN IS OPEN

Cantor and his wife, Karen Lebovitz, developed Benefizz, a sparkling probiotic drink available in lemonade, cranberry, and ginger.

They and their business partners officially launched the line in 2016. As production increased, they needed more space. Cantor knew other business owners who needed the same.

In order to sell a food or beverage product in Tennessee, it must be prepared in a certified, inspected commercial kitchen. But Cantor found few qualified spaces for rent in the Mid-South.

Cantor and Lebovitz developed OtherFoods Kitchen to help fill the gap. They also co-own Otherlands Coffee Bar in Midtown.

OtherFoods opened on Madison Avenue in 2018 and moved to its current space at 1249 Heistan Place in 2019.

The partners renovated and retrofitted the building with a shared pantry and prep tables, commercial-grade equipment, and cold and frozen storage. It offers docks with truck access for pickup and delivery and a few luxuries--WiFi, help cleaning up, and complimentary linen service.

OtherFoods is open 24-hours a day to meet any members businesses' schedule or preparation needs.

Its rental rates are affordable, which makes it more accessible for entrepreneurs with less startup capital. The rates range from \$11 to \$15 per hour. Most commercial kitchens charge between \$15 and \$30 an hour.

AMPLIFYING SUCCESS

Richard and Molly McCracken are members of OtherFoods and owners of Amplified Meal Prep. Amplified specializes in "healthy comfort food" prepared to meet their clients' specific dietary needs.

Customers place online orders for tailored meals using Amplified's custom meal builder. Those meals are then delivered or picked up on an assigned day. Their best sellers include their honey garlic chicken and pasta dishes.

The Amplified team utilizes space at OtherFoods two days a week. Molly McCracken said they're currently producing around 1,400 meal packages in those two days.

"We serve a huge demographic" said Richard McCracken "From people who have elderly parents who just can't prepare food for themselves to people who are just too busy and don't have time to make healthy meals."

The McCrackens said they've been able to serve more individual customers thanks to the OtherFoods space. It's also allowed them to expand their B-to-B sales for stores in and around the Mid-South.

"There is definitely room for growth, and I can see the kitchen doubling in member size," said Cantor contemplating the future of OtherFoods Kitchen.

Author Ramona Springfield is a High Ground News Community Correspondent. Correspondents complete a six-week training and mentorship program to become neighborhood-based reporters. Correspondents live in underserved communities and hope to correct negative neighborhood narratives by diving into the nuances underlying big challenges and successful solutions.



Read more articles by Ramona Springfield.

Ramona Springfield is freelance writer, blogger, and avid reader. She is a resident of South Memphis and graduate of the first High Ground News Community Correspondents program.

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