



SNAPSHOT

Bakery's home-cooked recipes draw Kosovo fans

Business ponders future growth as demand grows



Valbona Raifi, center, and staff at the City Bakery.

Photo: USAID Young Entrepreneurs Program

“There was a real lack on the market of providers of traditional foods,” says Raifi, 28, of the idea for their business. However, as a result of USAID’s assistance I often hear “You make it like my Mom did,” a common refrain from the bakery’s legion of fans, Raifi says.

Husband-and-wife bakery owners Valbona Raifi and Faton Deshishku both grew up eating grandma dishes steeped in tradition. Today, with USAID’s help, they are sharing those recipes with customers with a hankering for savoring (but none of the time for making) those same delights in their own homes.

Working from family and other recipes, City Bakery’s nine employees make everything to order in an orderly and bright basement kitchen. The couple owns the space, located in the heart of downtown Pristina—a twofold commercial advantage.

USAID, through its Young Entrepreneurs Program, which run from Spetember 2010 through September 2013, provided a matching \$7,000 (5,000 Euro) grant to kit out the bakery with commercial-grade ovens, mixers and refrigerators. Previously, the couple had made do with kitchen equipment borrowed from home.

“The help came at just the right time, as we were starting to grow,” says Deshishku, 30. “We didn’t have capacity before, so it has allowed us to reach all our customers.”

With no room for sit-down or counter sales, City Bakery mostly works on a call-in, take-out basis, though it offers delivery and catering services too. Just two to three hours’ notice suffices for the bakery to prepare anything from a deep-dish spinach pita to a platter of the traditional doughnuts called *llokuma*.

“There was a real lack on the market of providers of traditional foods,” says Raifi, 28, of the idea for their business. In its first 18 months, City Bakery has carved out its own competitive niche, mixing traditional know-how (yes, the couple’s mothers are both employees) and state-of-the art production capabilities. The result is neither an informal, home-based bakery, nor a large commercial bakery. The former is a commonly found arrangement in Pristina that cannot compete on volume or consistency, explains Deshishku. Meanwhile, the latter cannot compete on taste or quality, he adds.

Future plans involve either adding outdoor seating to the newly created pedestrian zone right outside City Bakery’s front door or moving to larger premises elsewhere. For now, the orders continue to pour in to City Bakery, many from office workers seeking Kosovo-style comfort food to bring home

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for dinner.

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