

Kawartha Lakes restaurants race to open for dine-in on Friday

Sarah Sobanski

Nicki Dedes, owner of the Olympia restaurant in downtown Lindsay, just got out of one meeting before heading into another in preparation for reopening to dine-in patrons on Friday (July 17).

“My staff that we’ve called back are going to live here until we open our doors for dinner,” she says, noting staff are working hard to get up-to-date on COVID-19 health protocols and facing a reality check when it comes to supplies and revising the restaurant’s menu.

“It’s like we’re opening a new business,” she adds. “It’s familiar, but it’s all different.”

The restaurant has been preparing for reopening to diners — including spring cleaning, spacing tables for social distancing, mapping flow of traffic decals on the floor and putting up plexiglass between booths.

“We want to recreate the Olympia restaurant experience that people have been accustomed or grown up with,” she says. “That’s the thing that’s most important.”

The Olympia is one of a number of Kawartha Lakes restaurants that have been a flurry of activity since the province green-lighted dine-in as a part of its Phase 3 reopening earlier this week. Also among them are [Graz Restobar](#) and [Donatella Bar and Grill](#) in Bobcaygeon.

Graz first reopened in the middle of May to offer takeout. When that wasn’t enough to sustain the business, owner David Doncalves says they added curbside barbecue to help “slow the bleeding.”

Still the restaurant was only bringing in around 20 per cent of what it normally would which wouldn’t sustain it long term.

“We have been waiting anxiously for the go ahead to reopen,” Doncalves says, noting the restaurant is finalizing its menu, training staff and ensuring pandemic safety measures. Like the Olympia, you’ll find plexiglass between the booths at Graz.

“We will be starting off slowly so that we can adapt further if we need to... The reduced capacity will have a significant impact on our business but it is much better than not being able to not open at all,” Doncalves adds. “We will need to find ways to adapt our business to the new normal.”

Times are tough for many businesses, but Doncalves says Graz is excited to see everyone. It’s a sentiment shared by Ned Kovacevic, owner of Donatella’s.

“We are pretty excited to be able to open,” Kovacevic says. “I think it’s just going to work.”