

Small Business Spotlight

| Aunt Julie's Kitchen: The Story Behind the Doughnuts

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Launched in June 2020, Aunt Julie's Kitchen, LLC food truck has been "the talk of the town" throughout Southeast Kansas. From vendor events to pop up locations, Aunt Julie's Kitchen has been creating a buzz with their fresh made, unique doughnuts.

Owner, John Mark Sandoval, moved to Oswego, Kansas in 2019. While he was interested in becoming an entrepreneur, he wasn't sure what type of business to launch.

"A local friend mentioned that he had heard of some folks making big, ugly doughnuts," Sandoval said. "Another friend had mentioned this before I moved to Kansas and it seemed like it might be a viable option."

After researching the business, Sandoval and several of his siblings traveled to Richmond, VA to work with an established company and get a feel for doughnut making. The family returned to Kansas and made the decision to move forward with the business idea. Aunt Julie's Kitchen provides made-from-scratch handmade, sourdough/yeast doughnuts mixed and fried on location.

"Our doughnuts are always mixed and fried right where you buy them," Sandoval said. "Our secret recipe is sourced from Mrs. Yoder's Kitchen – a highly regarded doughnut trailer based in Virginia."

The name of the business was created as a family effort, and named after Sandoval's mother. Sandoval wanted the brand to reflect hominess and warmth.

"Our mother has been our example of hospitality, friendship and friendliness," he said.

Starting a business in the midst of a global pandemic presents many unique challenges, however Sandoval says they have seen much success.

"Many events with large crowds were cancelled this year, however we've been able to use Facebook to let people know when and where we are going to be," he said.

Sandoval has been encouraged by the enthusiasm for new food business in both larger communities and smaller towns. New to the area, he said that his business has helped him make connections and feel like a part of the community.

"I've met people who are passionate about developing their local communities such as farmer's market managers, city officials and community advocates. As our customer base grows here, Southeast Kansas has really started to feel like home."

The mobility of the business has allowed for a broader customer base than a fixed location. Customers are encouraged to follow "Aunt Julie's Kitchen" on Facebook for updated dates and locations. The business is also available to cater private events with a minimum of 200 doughnuts.

"We want our customers to experience a meaningful, caring interaction over a simple doughnut purchase," Sandoval said. "Sometimes, it's the little things that make life great."