

Oggi Gourmet



Oggi Gourmet is a hidden gem within the Mount Holyoke Center at Harvard. Owned by Steve Welch, Oggi, meaning “today” in Italian, is where customers come for their daily doses of coffee, muffins, sandwiches, pizza and daily specials.

There’s a lively, feel good vibe about Oggi, where employees Julie Gil, Herson Juraeo and Elvett Welch all entertain the customers coming in. True to Steve’s goal of opening Oggi, there’s an upbeat spirit when you walk into Oggi. It isn’t just the décor and font choices that give this restaurant a casual feel, but also the way that everyone banter,



joking around with each other and customers. Steve wanted to establish a venue where people can come to get into a good mood, to have a positive experience where customers can be open to trying Steve’s specials, one of the most exciting parts about his business for him.

Steve Welch, the owner of Oggi, has a relaxed vibe about him – he’s charismatic, sassy and fun. He has built a relationship with his customers that go beyond the experience of his restaurant. Customers joke with each other and the staff, each exchanging humorous barbs and quips. People don’t just come to Oggi for the food; they come for Steve.



Steve’s favorite part of the workday is planning his specials. Each day is an adventure and a challenge – to design a new soup, a new delicious sandwich or a new weird pizza. He wants to give his customers an option to experience a combination of flavors they typically wouldn’t eat. Some days are easier than others. Some days, he’ll walk

in with a vision of what he wants to make. Some days, it’ll be a little more difficult. Nevertheless, it’s one of those simple joys built into the everyday of his job.





He loves the pizza business because it's like creating a painting. Ingredients for pizza are basic in terms of the dough and sauce, but it's the toppings that make each one special. Each day, Steve paints a picture. He's always

striving for that masterpiece. On the days where creating that beautiful aesthetic masterpiece doesn't quite work out, Steve just guarantees that it tastes good. There's a whimsical touch to all of the specials that is backed with Steve's expertise and knowledge. He mixes and matches whatever his heart desires, oftentimes with great success. More often than not, the special runs out. He wants Oggi to be a place where people step out of their comfort zone and try something new.





Watching Steve interact with his customers and employees is a work of art in and of itself. It's fun to watch and partake. He encourages them to try something new if they have never been to Oggi before. Some customers come in to give Steve suggestions and their take on the food. The regulars sometimes just pop by to say hi to Steve when they walk past. Others have a repertoire with Steve, but it isn't just Steve. The relaxed vibe Steve evokes has translated onto his employees.





Julie, Elvett and Herson each have their own favorite customers. For instance, Elvett has lived in Germany for some time so whenever German tourists come in, he always finds something to bond over. It provides for a great customer experience.



Even the work dynamic is fun. There would be no other way that Oggi would be such a great place. The happiness Steve and his employees derive from their work translates well to the customers.



Oggi caters to a part of the restaurant experience that has the customer leaving with a grin on their face. It's about the people and the culture of the restaurant. It's amazing to see how Steve has been able to establish his brand, one that is full of warmth and laughter.



Not only are the food and the experience exciting, but Oggi's journey also has been quite interesting.

Prior to Oggi, Steve had another full-service restaurant with some of his brothers. When it closed, Steve wanted to stay in the food industry, in the pizza business specifically. However, he wanted to be in the sector of the pizza business that was more recreational, where he would have the freedom to put unconventionally ingredients on a fairly conventional meal. He experimented with a friend in Jamaica Plain to perfect his dough recipe for the pizza. It was just his luck that this friend in Jamaica Plain owned a catering business. More often than not, there would be extra food that Steve could use as



ingredients for his pizza creations. For instance, he would take sea scallops wrapped in bacon on a white sauce previously made for catering and put it on a pizza. His imagination and knowledge of what combinations of flavors would leave taste buds singing was amazing. Within 4 months of opening, Oggi was on Best of Boston pizza.



Oggi spent about a year and a half in Jamaica Plain before moving to the Financial District for 5 years. 9 years ago, Oggi moved into its current location. Soon, Oggi will be moving just down the street, to an outdoor place with higher street traffic. It promises more visibility with longer hours and more possibilities for expansion.



Customer bases are changing too as Steve moves from location to location. At Harvard, there's a lot of tourist traffic, leading him to have translations of his menu in the back. The relocating of the offices within the Mount Holyoke Center has also meant that business has been slower recently as the regular's workplaces change. While some temporary workers are around, it isn't the same as seeing an old friend come in for a slice. Regardless of customer traffic, Steve's day doesn't change much as he must still prepare for each day's opening the same.



Steve drives to work at 5AM, always stopping by Starbucks for two triple chocolate mochas. He shows up and plans the specials, spending most of the morning preparing the food; he prepares the dough, chops vegetables and banter with the morning regulars in between. Most people drop by for a beverage, but the smart ones always leave with one of Steve's muffins, a perfect combination of moist and crunch.



As the day progresses, the aroma of pizza fills the air as Steve prepares advance order pizzas as well as pizzas to sell by the slice. The grill fills up as lunch and dinner meals are ordered. Typically, Herson typically mans the grill while Julie handles the drinks and register work. Elvett and Steve tag-team the pizza orders as well as helping out with the register as needed. Each day, they handle the work well, keeping up a positive work environment coupled with a light-hearted camaraderie.



Steve typically leaves around 2PM, leaving his restaurant in the care of Elvett, Herson and Julie. They are a fine team with other employees coming in later in the day as well. Elvett typically closes. It's all in a days work.

When I was there shooting Oggi Gourmet, I could tell

that everyone enjoyed the work. Even though it required them to be on their feet all day for hours at a time, they had fun being there. They were like a family.

What Oggi offers isn't just great food, it's a great experience.



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