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Business Comment

by Richard Jones
Farmer Jones

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Teamwork and a positive attitude will reap rewards

The blend of Scottish and Turkish culture and tradition has proved a winning recipe for **Funda Gocuk** owner of The Phoenix Ale House and La Le restaurant

Small Business Focus in association with Inverness **BID** BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

The Phoenix and La Le restaurant, 106-110 Academy Street, Inverness, T: 01463 240300
For more information about Inverness BID: T: 01463 714550 E: info@inverness.uk.com www.invernessbid.co.uk

Q How would you describe your business to a stranger?

A We have two businesses in one premises - Phoenix Ale House and La Le restaurant. The Phoenix is the oldest and most traditional bar in Inverness. It's a very historic building with original features dating back to the 18th century and we serve both local and national real ales and beers. La Le is a Turkish and Mediterranean restaurant. We aim to provide our customers authentic and fresh Turkish dining. We have 25 years experience in preparing traditional Turkish and Mediterranean dishes. We only use the finest products. Everything is prepared daily and cooked in the charcoal grill - our flatbreads, meat, fish - so customers get the authentic taste of Turkish and Mediterranean cuisine. Hospitality is everything in Turkish culture so we have a friendly team that is always happy to give a warm welcome, provide good food and a memorable night out.

Q What inspired you to start the business?

A Back home in Turkey my parents own a hospitality business so growing up I was always helping them in the kitchen, front of house and chatting to customers. All my life I've enjoyed working in a restaurant. It's what I know from my mum and dad and also my grandparents who have owned cafes, restaurants and a butcher shop. I've learned a lot from them over the years. Also, being among people makes me happy, I'm a people person! I love doing what I do so I've carried on doing what I know from my parents. That's what inspired me in business.

Q How has your business developed?



Funda Gocuk owner of La Le Turkish Mediterranean Restaurant and the Phoenix Ale House. Picture: James Mackenzie

A La Le opened 10 days before lockdown and in November 2020 we took over The Phoenix. It was a difficult time during Covid. Everything was challenging and unknown. The pub and restaurant business is highly competitive - customers have no lack of choice if they want to eat in or dine out. For us, it has become more important than ever to adopt strategies that enable us to attract more customers to our business.

Q What are your plans to develop your business in the future?

A The Phoenix is a historic bar, we're very privileged to have it and our regulars are very happy to keep it the same as it is. The two businesses support each other. Every day is a challenge so we're working hard to provide good service to our customers.

Q What lessons have you learnt from your time in business?

A Your connection to other people, whether it's a professional colleague, a friend or a family member. Each relationship supports the other - it's teamwork. I have a team behind me and I really appreciate them. Every day is not going to

be the best day! But if you look on the bright side, the difficult days can just be another way to grow and develop your character. Being positive and optimistic is a valuable life lesson, and the more you improve your outlook, the less the small things affect you. You also need to find out what you enjoy doing most and what you're good at. You have to enjoy what you do in life.

Q What's your vision for Inverness city centre?

A There is a lot we can do in the city centre together as a community; to work together and work things out together. It's beneficial for the city to work together.

Q Can you tell us something interesting about yourself?

A I'm a mother of two, I came to Scotland 25 years ago, I went to university and I was married here. I love running and I've done two charity runs for breast cancer, one with my daughter. One of my friends has breast cancer and that inspired me. I love learning new things, going to the gym (when I have time!) and walking in our beautiful landscape here.

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