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Adrian and Shannon Beaty recently opened the Seasonal 56 restaurant and the Seasonal To Go retail store in Aldergrove. They focus on offering a wide variety of elaborate dishes using fresh ingredients from Fraser Valley suppliers.

ANDREW BUCHOLTZ PHOTO

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Running a restaurant is a daunting task on its own, but that isn't enough for Shannon and Adrian Beaty. Their Aldergrove restaurant, Seasonal 56, is integrated with a new retail store (The Seasonal To Go) and a catering company (The Seasonal Experience). They also offer special features such as cooking classes and the chance to dine at the chef's table. Shannon Beaty said the diverse facets of their business allow them to offer customers a variety of services.

"They all work very well together," she said. "Say you're someone that comes in for dinner, you experience us that way, but maybe you're someone who needs catering and you've been to our restaurant, so you think of us. Or maybe you've experienced us at a catering function and heard that we had a restaurant, so you plan your next Christmas party there. It all sort of intertwines."

Beaty said the workload keeps her and husband Adrian busy, though.

"I think we both wish we could clone ourselves," she said with a laugh.

The Beatys opened The Seasonal Experience as a combined restaurant and catering operation five years ago in downtown Langley. Their catering business is still based downtown, but they moved their restaurant into an Aldergrove industrial park just north of the 264th Street freeway exit last month and set up an adjoining retail store.

Beaty said they made the move to be in a location more easily accessible to patrons and customers, to gain more space for an integrated retail outlet, to be closer to their suppliers in Abbotsford and Chilliwack and to separate the restaurant and catering businesses.

"We wanted to separate the two and increase the size of our restaurant," she said. "My husband's always wanted to do the retail side of things, and we wanted to display the retail."

Beaty said the retail side of the business offers some of their famous dishes prepared for easy reheating at home, as well as some of their more unusual ingredients. She said it can be a cost-effective option in this economic environment for those who enjoy gourmet food regularly but can't afford to go out all the time.

"Maybe, instead of going out twice a week, you go out once and pick up a Seasonal To Go entrée at the same time," she said.

Beaty said the industrial park is an unconventional, but effective, location for a restaurant. The majority of the restaurant's windows overlook 56 Avenue and the trees on the other side, so the atmosphere is more rural than urban.

"We're in an industrial park, but you're not seeing the park," she said. "Where we are, it's country. It feels right."

Beaty said the unusual location also helps to draw in neighbourhood workers for lunch and allows for plenty of parking during dinner.

"At night, we have the entire park to ourselves," she said.

Seasonal 56 concentrates on serving gourmet cuisine with fresh local ingredients in a comfortable, relaxed environment.

Some of their local offerings include cream of mushroom soup, featuring organic mushrooms from Aldergrove, spinach salad with Agassiz Farm House brie and organic chicken and ducks from Chilliwack's Polderside Farms. The menu offers a wide variety of dishes, from prosciutto-wrapped free-range chicken breast with apple, sage, and foccaccia stuffing to straccetti with local organic mushrooms and bolognese sauce.

Beaty said she and Adrian are passionate about using local ingredients whenever possible.

"It's a huge focus," she said. "That's a big factor in what drives us. It's about shopping the local products."

They also offer a variety of B.C. wines, many of which come from the Fraser Valley.

"We try to focus on the local wines, the B.C. wines, as much as possible," she said.

The restaurant also offers twice-a-month cooking classes, some of which are demonstrations and some of which are more hands-on, as well as a special chef's table, where diners get a front-row seat in the heart of the kitchen and are served their own unique five- or eight-course meals. Beaty said the Chef's Table is an idea popular in the U.S. which Adrian was eager to bring to the Lower Mainland.

"It was just one of those things he felt he'd like to offer," she said. "He lives and eats and breathes cooking."

Beaty said a meal at the chef's table is a unique experience.

"You get to sit in there and enjoy the evening in the thick of it," she said.

Beaty said the move has worked out perfectly so far.

"Everything about this space from the time we decided to take it on fell into place," she said. "I was blown away by the response."

Beaty said many local residents have told her they're thrilled to have the new restaurant and retail outlet in Aldergrove.

"They've said 'We needed something like this.'"

- By Andrew Bucholtz

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