



LA PAPA Kitchen & Coffee House

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La Papa, Ireland – Case Study Joanne Buck & Gareth Gaynor

Business in Numbers

Year established: 2023

Number of businesses: 1

Employees: 17

Energy as a % of costs: €16k (5%)

Digital Channel Presence: Facebook and Instagram.

Business Overview

La Papa is a kitchen and coffee house that opened a new location in Letterkenny in 2023. Originally established in Buncrana, the company serves dishes influenced by Irish, South American, Caribbean, and Mexican flavours. The restaurant combines La Papa favourites with new artisan menu items and offers sandwiches, soups, organic and fair-trade barista coffee, homemade cakes, and bakes prepared by the in-house team.

How is food waste monitored or reduced?

La Papa is not yet formally monitoring food waste, but it is moving in that direction. The company is getting a food bin from Letterkenny Skip Hire, and food waste will be monitored after that is in place. The owners also explain that the business does not generate large amounts of leftover food. When customers leave food on their plates, the team provides takeaway boxes and encourages them to take the food home.

How is digital used to grow and promote the business?

La Papa uses Facebook as its main marketing and client-engagement channel. The team posts constantly, communicates directly with customers through private messages, receives reviews, and runs competitions that it finds effective for promoting the outlet. Alongside Facebook and Instagram, the business also advertises through Highland Radio.

What data is informing key decisions?

La Papa uses an **RST Epos POS** system designed for the hospitality sector. The system generates live financial data, which the business reviews at least daily. The key measures mentioned are turnover, margins, and costs.

What is the role of local sourcing?

La Papa sources locally where possible. In particular, the restaurant uses Ballyholey Farm as a local supplier for all fresh produce.

How is social media shaping customer relationships?

La Papa uses Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and Google to engage with stakeholders both publicly and personally. Public posts support general communication, while Google reviews and private messaging create more direct interaction with customers. The owners also monitor Google Analytics and wider interaction through Google.

What tools support energy or waste tracking?

La Papa already uses LED lighting, motion sensors, and heating timers in the building. The company also worked with the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), which provided a free Green Audit worth €1,800. An external consultant reviewed the premises and business practices and made recommendations on more energy-efficient equipment and measures to reduce energy use. La Papa has since applied for an Energy Efficiency Grant from the LEO and hopes to receive €10,000 towards new equipment.

Describe your leadership style. What principles guide your daily decisions?

The owners reject the stereotype of the dictatorial restaurant boss. They describe a delegated structure with a head chef, a positive atmosphere, and an effort to ensure that everyone is listened to. Joanne manages payroll, rotas, administration, and HR, while Gareth manages suppliers and day-to-day operations.

An example of how you have led through adversity

The owners describe COVID as a major learning curve. They explain that their initial venture in Buncrana failed, but that they identified what went wrong and made sure those mistakes were not repeated. They say that the systems now in place allow La Papa to run effectively and profitably.

Do you see your business implementing other initiatives that acknowledge ESG in the future?

The owners say they were not familiar with the term ESG, but that environmental, social, and governance issues are already very much present in the business. They also note that new legislation, including legislation related to sustainability, is a constant issue they need to stay aware of.

What are the barriers or challenges to your business progressing in the ESG space?

La Papa highlights the limits that small businesses face. The owners explain that they do not have a large budget and do not have dedicated HR or legal departments like bigger companies. They give the example of employees questioning GDPR policies, including the legality and appropriateness of video recording in front-of-house areas and video/audio recording at the till. They describe the development of appropriate policies and procedures as time-consuming and costly for SMEs.

“Where possible we source locally. In particular we use Ballyholey Farm, a local producer for all our fresh produce.”

