

Bocca Bona grabs pizza the take away action in Balerno

A business partnership founded on pasta and pupils had led to the opening of a new pizzeria in Balerno.

Chris Moonie and Davide Scuccato both run successful businesses in Leith but suffered the double whammy of disruption caused by the Edinburgh trams extension and the coronavirus pandemic.

Davide's La Riva restaurant in Assembly Street provided hundreds of lunches each week to pupils attending Chris's Mackenzie School of English in nearby Constitution Street.

The arrangement was a winner with teenage students from Italy, Spain and Austria, who made up the bulk of the international roll call at the successful language and cultural school.

Following a major refurbishment and investment, 2020 was expected to be the school's best year with £2.5 million in revenue forecast, but when Covid-19 struck business disappeared as anxious students remained at home in Europe.

The economic fall-out of coronavirus had a knock on effect on La Riva, which was already dealing with vastly reduced footfall due to the ongoing trams extension construction.



Chris Moonie (left) and Davide Scuccato have opened Bocca Bona in Balerno

But the two neighbouring entrepreneurs decided to combine their business and hospitality skills to open Bocca Bona pizzeria in Balerno's Main Street, filling a gap in the market.

The literal translation of Bocca Bona is "good mouth" and it refers to someone who enjoys good food and appreciates quality produce. Since it opened in December business has been brisk and customers are enjoying Davide's pizza making skills, honed in the Veneto region of northern Italy from where he originates.

Chris Moonie said: "La Riva had been badly impacted by the trams project which has been a real challenge for many Leith businesses and the pandemic was the topping on the pizza which

Davide could have done without.

“My international school was set up to enjoy our most successful year in business but that all came to a grinding halt when the full consequences of Covid-19 started to hit home.

“We have a good working relationship and decided to combine my business and marketing skills with Davide’s food and hospitality expertise. Our market research showed Edinburgh is saturated with pizzerias but there is nothing in the Balerno area, and certainly nothing remotely like Bocca Bona, where each week we ship in the highest quality fresh ingredients direct from Italy.

“The initial signs are promising and customers seem to appreciate the care and effort that we put in to sourcing traditional and authentic ingredients. We hope that [once Bocca Bona is established](#) that we will open further outlets.”

Separately, Chris still hopes that in time he will be able to reopen the language school which was founded in 2008. In addition to providing English tutoring, [the Mackenzie School](#) introduces students to Scottish culture through visits to leading historical and educational attractions.

In the meantime, he is about to [launch Wee Mack’s nursery](#) in the same building, which will cater for young children aged from six months to pre-school. The facility boasts four large play zones with access to an 80 sq m play area and has space available for 70 children across four age groups.

Wee Mack’s was created during the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore the nursery has been designed to follow new government guidelines regarding distancing, infection control and hygiene in an early learning setting.