

Successful Applicant: The Saigon Kitchen

Awarded £10,000 for ceilings, plastering, roofing, painting and kitchen fit-out



Interview with our Grant Advisor, Crover:
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Tell me about yourselves and The Saigon Kitchen.

We're Trung Trinh (he/him) and Vicky Trinh (she/her) and The Saigon Kitchen is a Vietnamese restaurant at 25 Zetland Road, The Arches, BS6 7AH.

Trung: For many years I lived in Hồ Chí Minh City, previously known as Saigon. Vicky and I met there, working together in the TV industry. After we got married, we moved to Bristol and I wanted to share Vietnamese food and my love of cooking with the people of my new city.

Vicky: Trung is very passionate about sharing authentic Vietnamese food and spreading the love around Bristol.

About two years ago when the pandemic first started we launched a business from our own kitchen with Trung cooking for our neighbours and friends. We ended up with around 500 regular customers and they just really loved it.

'...real Vietnamese food, cooked and served by Vietnamese people...'

Tell me about the food you serve.

Trung: Lots of the dishes I serve were passed down to me from my mum. I spent my childhood cooking with my mum and sisters. We have a massive family in Vietnam so each time I cooked it was for about 40-60 people!

Since we moved to Bristol I've found it quite hard to get the herbs and other ingredients I need. We've worked hard to source all the ingredients to make sure our food is always authentic.

Our focus is real Vietnamese food, cooked and served by Vietnamese people (and of course my wife. She's half Vietnamese now!).

How has Saigon Kitchen diversified Zetland Road and The Arches?

Trung: Zetland Road already has Mexican, Italian, French and mezze restaurants. There have always been a lot of Vietnamese people in the area. We're able to serve them and help them stop feeling homesick but also introduce other groups of people to a new cuisine.

Lots of local Bristol residents have travelled to Vietnam. They like that we bring back the memory of their trip, because everyone has a great time there!

Vicky: It's also not just locals that are eating here. We've had lots of bookings from people in South Bristol, Bath and surrounding areas, with one table travelling 150 miles to visit us!



How difficult is to start a restaurant?

Trung: It's a challenge running a food business and balancing that with family. There are a lot of risks but because we have passion and want to make it work, we will make it work one way or another!

But The Saigon kitchen would never have worked without the support we have from family and friends. Vicky's taken time out of her career and her mum and dad have helped us financially. You need a lot of help from a lot of people to start a business. I am so lucky leaving a big family in Vietnam and finding another big family here in Bristol.

With The Saigon Kitchen we share that family feeling with our customers.

Vicky: I feel really proud of Trung for starting the business and the control he now has to cook amazing food and spread joy! Starting a new hospitality business during the covid pandemic is no small feat and I think it's great what we've achieved so far!



What commitments to sustainability have you made?

Vicky: During covid when we were running a food delivery business we ended up having to order loads of Tupperware. At Saigon Kitchen we've set up a system for people to bring it back to us and we either reuse or recycle it.

For our takeaway service we use All About The Cooks. Customers can book their food a day or so in advance which means we have a better idea of how much food we're cooking each evening and is helping us reduce food waste.



'It's a challenge running a food business... but because we have passion... we will make it work one way or another!'

'...starting a business in a new country is very different... You don't know who's going to help you... This grant is great! We've felt supported from the beginning.'



How do you and your business make Bristol a better place to live for our local residents?

Trung: Lots of people came up to the windows to look in and knock on the door to ask when we're opening. People have been excited about the new restaurant.

We've also had so many emails, phone calls and Facebook messages asking us when we're going to open. It feels like we've created a really happy place.

People come to The Saigon Kitchen and say to us that it's like going on holiday. They like that all of our staff are Vietnamese and enjoy asking them how to pronounce the names of the dishes and how to use chopsticks. It just feels really fun!

Visit The Saigon Kitchen

25 Zetland Road, The Arches, BS6 7AH

Web: thesaigonkitchen.co.uk

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How has this funding helped your business to trade and achieve your goals?

Vicky: You know there are going to be certain costs but as soon as builders come in and they start knocking things down you start to find out the real costs. We had a massive hole in the wall and lots of rewiring work we weren't expecting that almost doubled the cost of the building works, so this grant definitely helped! Without it we wouldn't have been able to afford to finish the walls and ceiling.

Trung: I worked in hospitality for many years in Vietnam but starting a business in a new country is very different. You don't know how to find the property or what the regulations are, or who's going to help you. It can feel like a lottery, you never know if you might win, but you're more likely to lose.

This grant is great! Our business plan completely changed because of the extra funding we could get. We've felt very supported from the beginning.