

OBIAA 2023 AWARDS SUBMISSION

Contact Name: Jules Fazio, Marketing Manager	Pillar & Category: Marketing & Promotions - Marketing
BIA/Organization: Downtown Niagara Falls	Time period: Spring/Summer 2022
Entry title: The Downtown Niagara Falls Eat Local Food Guide	
Project description: The Eat Local Food Guide is a comprehensive book that showcases and promotes the diverse range of restaurant offerings in Downtown Niagara Falls, serving as a central location for users to discover the many dining options available and to help them decide where to get their next meal. Our goal is to increase awareness, excitement, and ultimately boost the number of visitors to our local businesses. We distributed physical books and also created a digital version to promote wider access to the guide.	

NEED OR OPPORTUNITY

Serving over 150 businesses in the downtown core, the Downtown Niagara Falls BIA strives to improve the downtown environment, advocate for our members, market and promote our businesses, support Economic Development initiatives, and organize events to attract people to Downtown. We have a staff team of 6 individuals working in the departments of marketing and events.

At our office, we know how delicious the food in Downtown Niagara Falls is, often spending our lunches at or ordering take out from the various restaurants on the street. We wanted to create a comprehensive book that showcases the incredible offerings by developing an “Eat Local Food Guide” to highlight and promote our small businesses. The development of this guide is in line with our 2022 – 2026 Strategic Plan, particularly the objective of creating both downloadable and physical experience guides. The main goal of this initiative is to increase awareness of offerings to Southern Ontarians thereby increasing the number of visits, shoppers, and interactions.

AUDIENCE

Niagara Falls Locals

1. We love supporting local, and we believe that Niagara Falls residents feel the same. In fact, according to a study conducted by American Express, 81% of consumers believe that supporting small, independently owned businesses is important.
2. A report by the National Restaurant Association states that 67% of consumers said they were more likely to visit a restaurant that sources its food locally.
3. People often seek out new dining experiences and can become tired of at the same large restaurant chains repeatedly.

Tourists in Niagara Falls

1. Tourists often look for local cuisine and unique dining experiences that are not available in their home country or city.
2. Tourists tend to be more adventurous when it comes to trying new foods and are willing to experiment with different cuisines, and we have a lot of diverse choices in Downtown Niagara Falls!
3. Social media has a significant impact on tourists' eating habits, as they often search for Instagrammable and photogenic food spots and share their experiences online.

Goal: To increase awareness and excitement of restaurant offerings in Downtown Niagara Falls.

Objectives:

1. Increase website traffic: To have at least 300 website views on the Eat Local Food Guide page by Labour Day 2022 (Monday, September 5).
2. Increase conversation about the Guide/Restaurants: receive at least a dozen positive calls or messages regarding the Eat Local Food Guide by the end of summer.
3. Increase foot traffic to restaurants: increase foot traffic to participating restaurants throughout the summer.

IMPLEMENTATION

In January 2022, our Executive Director presented the idea of creating a Food Guide for Downtown Niagara Falls, inspired by a similar project she had completed at a different BIA. The Board enthusiastically supported the initiative, meaning we got to get started right away! Our team immediately began planning the project, determining necessary assets, steps, and a timeline.

Necessary Assets:

- A Photographer
- A camera
- Camera equipment (lights, a tripod, reflectors)
- A table
- Fabric for a backdrop
- Photo studio poles

Steps:

1. Hire a photographer
2. Schedule shooting times with businesses
3. Shoot photos
4. Conduct interviews and write copy for businesses
5. Edit Photos
6. Deliver all content to Graphic Designer
7. Design book
8. Send pages to businesses for approval
9. Send print-ready file to printer
10. Create digital book and upload to website
11. Distribute physical books
12. Prepare books for Canada Post & bring to facility
13. Promote guide and businesses via social media

Our first step was to hire a photographer. Within two weeks, we found a talented photographer who was excited to work on this project. We took inventory of our existing assets, purchased what we needed, and promptly set up an in-office photo studio.

Our Communications Coordinator sent out a call for participation to our membership and offered one-hour time slots for members to sign up for using Calendly. There was no additional cost to members to participate in the Eat Local Food Guide, we just asked that they bring 3 food options and any props they would want in the photos. If members needed assistance or were too busy to deliver the food, our staff picked it up from their businesses. Our Photographer shot the food options while our Communications Coordinator conducted short interviews with business owners and wrote copy for each page.

After a month of photography appointments, photo editing, interviews and copy writing, we had all the content we needed to create the book! Our in-house Graphic Designer got to work compiling everything into pages using InDesign. Each business was sent their page for approval before printing, and while waiting for the physical copies to arrive our Graphic Designer turned the guide into a digital flippable book using Issuu and [published it on our website](#).

When the books were delivered, it was time to start distributing and promoting! We distributed the books by driving around the city, delivering them to hotels, businesses, and Airbnbs. We also sent out 3,500 books through Canada Post Neighbourhood Mailing which we did by using their Precision Targeter tool and spending lots of time on the phone with customer service to make sure we had met all the specific requirements for packaging and mailing.

After the books were distributed, we promoted the guide and the businesses via social media, releasing individual promotional posts for each business and directing viewers to the digital guide on our website.

Budget

We spent **approximately \$5,843** on this project, excluding staff wages. Additionally, we already owned some assets such as a table, poles for the studio backdrop, camera lights, a tripod, and reflectors, which would increase the initial cost if another BIA were to replicate the project.

Breakdown

Photo Studio Backdrop - \$70

5,000 Books - \$0.96 ea. = \$4,795

Canada Post Neighbourhood Mailing - \$750 for 3,500 houses

Issuu - \$19/month = \$228/year

Challenges

Challenge: Lack of familiarity with Canada Post Neighbourhood Mailing.

Solution: Don't be afraid to ask for help! We frequently reached out to customer service to help us gain a better understanding of how their program works. We also developed a document with a simplified breakdown of the steps and requirements for future use.

Challenge: Difficulty coordinating businesses to participate. There were a number of reasons some felt they wouldn't be able to participate such as not being open during regular office hours and not having time to deliver the food to our office.

Solution: Be as accommodating as possible! Our team offered to pick up the food from businesses if needed and we rearranged our schedules to meet business owners' availability, often staying as late as 9:00 pm! It was definitely worth it though.

Challenge: Business members not wanting to participate initially due to being unsure of the quality of work we would produce.

Solution: Show them what you're capable of! Once we completed the first couple photoshoots, we shared the photos and a mock-up page with our membership to show them what they could expect from the food guide. After this was shared, all of those businesses ended up participating!

Innovation

The Eat Local Food Guide is the first guide of its kind for Downtown Niagara Falls. Our goal was to create a central resource that highlights the food offerings in the area, which were previously only available on our website. To reach a wider audience and promote local businesses, we decided to make a physical copy of the guide in addition to our online presence. We hope this guide will encourage more people to explore Downtown Niagara Falls and support the many great food establishments in the area.

RESULTS

Objective	Result
Increase website traffic: To have at least 300 website views on the Eat Local Food Guide page by Labour Day 2022.	We received over 500 page views on the Eat Local Food webpage by our specified date.
Increase conversation about the Guide: receive at least a dozen positive calls or messages regarding the Eat Local Food Guide by the end of summer.	<p>After the release of the Food Guide, we received dozens of calls, messages and emails from people who were excited about the guide. Some individuals called to inquire about specific restaurants featured in the book, while others expressed their appreciation for having a comprehensive guide to local dining options. We were particularly delighted to hear from individuals who had used the guide to try out new restaurants and enjoyed their dining experiences. It was gratifying to receive their positive feedback and know that the guide was achieving its goal of promoting local businesses.</p> <p>We even had the Mayor of Niagara Falls reach out to say he thought it was a great marketing piece!</p>
Increase foot traffic to restaurants: increase foot traffic to participating restaurants throughout the summer.	While the result of this objective is difficult to track, we did have many business owners mention that they had plenty of customers come in and mention the Food Guide.



Quotes from members of the public:

“I received the booklet this week. What a great idea! I have always wanted something like this so we could instantly see the restaurants and coffee shops downtown to help choose where I can meet with friends. It is perfect! Thank you for putting this wonderful little food guide together.” - **Frances C., Cogeco**

“I just wanted to say how WELL done this guide is for eating downtown. I think it’s a piece of amazing marketing and a really useful tool for you and your businesses. Outstanding job!” - **Jim Diodati, Mayor, City of Niagara Falls**

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

Digital Food Guide: <https://downtownniagarafalls.com/2022-food-guide/>

<p>Bake. Frost. Repeat. ✓</p> <p>4400 Queen St 289-296-1993 @bake.frost.repeat.niagara f Bake.Frost.Repeat</p> <p>Bake. Frost. Repeat. is owned by a husband and wife team who always dreamt of opening their own bakery, which has become a reality for them. They offer signature cupcakes, cookies, cakes, and other desserts with custom orders available. If you are throwing a party, you can count on Bake. Frost. Repeat. to make an impressive themed-cake for your wedding, baby shower, or birthday party.</p> <p><i>Pictured here:</i> Assorted Gourmet Cupcakes, Oreo Cake, Mini Cheesecakes</p> <p>“The best cupcakes and ginger cookie I ever tasted! I called with a last minute order and Justin and Alisha were wonderful! Cupcakes were moist and succulent, oh so delicious! A must try!!! Highly recommend and I am definitely going to return.”</p> <p>- Nateasha Q.</p> <p>★★★★★</p> 	<p>Camp Cataract ✓</p> <p>4317 Queen St 905-519-2267 campcataract.com @camp.cataract f @CampCataract</p> <p>Camp Cataract is a unique venue, featuring ping-pong tables, crokinole, vintage pinball machines, board games, and so much more! Accessibility is a pillar of their vision over at Camp Cataract – they can accommodate most dietary restrictions, are wheelchair accessible and they even have a dog-friendly patio! Visit Camp Cataract to enjoy amazing food and drinks in this fun, kitschy atmosphere that is sure to tickle your nostalgia for summer camps!</p> <p><i>Pictured here:</i> S'more Than A Feeling, Pierogi Pizza, Sweet Chicken Quesadilla, Apple Blossoms, Cabin Party Pizza</p> <p>“Found this little gem this Friday, the ambiance is just amazing from the details of the camp decor to the music and not to mention the food is delicious. Would definitely recommend this place to anyone and will be looking forward to coming in again. The owner was very kind and very accommodating and the games were so much fun.”</p> <p>- Trisha V.</p> 
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