



Brown Bag Bistro Celebrates Five Years In Business

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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ALTON - Brown Bag Bistro recently celebrated five years of being in business. The restaurant, which specializes in sandwiches, soups, salads and more, has become an Alton community staple over the years.

To celebrate this milestone, they're offering discounts on gift cards and encourage readers to "stock up" as there's no limit - \$50 gift cards are available for \$40 or \$25 gift cards are available for \$20.

Chris and Erin Velloff, co-owners of the Brown Bag Bistro, recently appeared on an episode of [Our Daily Show! on Riverbender.com](#) to discuss the restaurant's success so far and how they got to this point.

"I've always loved to cook and I thought, 'You know what? When and if this building next door becomes available, let's start a restaurant,'" Chris said. "So that's what we did, with absolutely no experience except Erin working at Loading Dock - other than that, I had never stepped foot in a commercial kitchen, nor had any of my family members, so it just worked."

Starting with a small staff and limited menu, the mother-and-daughter duo gradually found their footing running the restaurant and have added several menu items since. The original lineup consisted of about eight sandwiches, most of which centered around the names of family members and are still available today, such as the Sammy Roo and Rosie Roo (each named after Chris's parents), and the Adamo.

Several sandwiches and other menu items have been added over the years, including former monthly specials that proved especially popular - Chris announced that their new sandwich is going to be called "The Feisty Porker."

Chris said it feels great for Brown Bag Bistro to be known as a staple in the Alton community.

“It feels great, because we do work a lot of hours and we’re like, ‘God, this pays off,’” she said.

Erin said that they have no plans to move the business for now, but she would like to see a second location potentially open someday.

“We’re there; I can’t imagine a different space,” Erin said. “I think it would be awesome if a second location eventually opened - or if someone wanted to franchise it out so we didn’t have to deal with all that - but yeah, we’re staying there.”

As far as their message to the community, Chris said they wouldn’t be where they are without them.

“We wouldn’t be there without the community, bottom line,” Chris said. “And also without the staff. You can come up with any recipe, but it’s the cooks, you know?”

Erin added that many staff members have been with the restaurant for several years. To find out more about the Brown Bag Bistro, visit their [website](#) or [Facebook page](#).

The full interview with Chris and Erin can be watched at the top of this story or on Riverbender.com/video.