‘It’s brutal’: Island Pepper Co looks to expand its operation

Thomas Eley
News Staff

Finding commercial real estate in Greater Victoria can be “brutal,” according to Vincent Capitano, founder of Island Chef Pepper Co.

The West Shore-based company is looking to expand in 2024, Capitano said, but needs space to do that.

“That is a never-ending search, but we’re operating out of a 400-square-foot space. And it’s just very claustrophobic. So, we want to expand our growth and operation,” Capitano said.

Hot sauces have exploded in popularity, going from seeing one or two hot sauces on supermarket shelves to being an industry worth billions.

This growth can be attributed to social media and YouTube channels such as Hot Ones, said Capitano, where celebrities will be interviewed and have to run the gauntlet of hot sauces.

“I’ve been a chef for 20 years. So, making food has always been a big thing. We were never like super into like really spicy. Then we watched the YouTube show Hot Ones. And I wondered if I could handle these like really super-hot peppers. So then we started growing them. And I made my own mimics hot sauces. It was from season seven. And the sauces turned out, so that my first dabble.”



Island Chef Pepper Co, has a range of 29 various, sauces, jams, rubs and more. Vincent Capitano, the founder, was a chef for over 20 years before starting to make hot sauces. (Photo supplied/Facebook)

He said he made a bunch of hot sauces for Brewery and The Beast a few years ago and had 700 people interested in what he was selling. Capitano said he decided to branch out a little and sell a few bottles of hot sauce.

“So I started making like a couple, bringing them to the farmers’ market. My goal was to sell four or five bottles at the market. I wanted to make enough money that at the end of the summer, we could go on a nice little staycation here on the island. That was the whole goal.”

Capitano said he now produces 100 gallons of hot sauces a week, and they can be found at Fairway, Thrifty Foods and Loblaws. He said there is also a lot of crossover between the production of hot sauces and the brewing process of beer.

“When comparing beer and hot sauce production, they are super similar. In terms of the fermentation process, we use a lot of the same equipment. There’s a lot of similar processing and modelling. The only difference is that it is not authorized, so it’s easier for people to make it. And it doesn’t need to be carbonated.”

Capitano was the former executive sous chef for the lieutenant governor of B.C.

“I used to do a lot of, like, really fancy cooking. And then, like I had my perspective. I have two small children. And my perspective changed on what I wanted to be doing with my time, and how much I wanted to be working away from my family.”

He said he never really intended to leave the professional kitchen behind, and even though he might not be earning quite the same as they were, the trade-off was he got to spend a lot more time with his children.

“I was tired of working 100 hours a week and only getting paid for 30. So I became an entrepreneur, and now I work 100 hours a week, but I don’t get paid at all,” he joked.

His company now has over 29 products, ranging from hot sauces to spicy meat snacks and jellies, to name a few, but that can be the challenge of being a former chef. He said you soon start seeing a need for different types of food.

“It’s always scary as a new entrepreneur. But what I enjoy about it is that I wasn’t expecting the community I’ve built around this company. And like my supporters and customers, some of my biggest supporters are now friends of mine.”

In the future, he hopes to open a wing bar and create a dining experience each month, combining his culinary experience with his hot sauces, where the money would go to a charity that his community would choose.

“It’s like a super, super fancy farm table dinner where you can only get tickets by like a lottery. And then we use that money to go to a charity of choice. That would be my focus, and I also get to flex my creative side.”

Now that he is a hot sauce entrepreneur, he said people are surprised that Captiano can cook despite his reputation in the culinary world.

“I’ve achieved a lot in the culinary world. So it’s just always funny. ‘People are like, oh, do you know anything about cooking?’ I’m among the top 100 chefs in Canada, so I’m pretty good.”

People ‘abusing’ Langford by camping in RVs on main road: resident

Thomas Eley
News Staff

The recreational and commercial vehicles parking along Goldstream Avenue need to go, says Langford resident Ralph King.

People park and sleep in their vehicles, leaving a trail of garbage behind, and while King is sympathetic to people who might be unhoused, this situation has been going on for three years, he said.

“People coming into Langford using this stretch of road will see all this mess,” said King. “We used to be known as the ‘dog patch,’ which reminds me of what Langford used to be like.”

The vehicles line Goldstream Avenue between Vantilum Avenue and stretching up to the border of Colwood, King said.

“I have approached the Langford council and nothing seems ever to get done, and when a bylaw officer comes to do an inspection, people will just get in their cars and park them an extra 100 metres up the road.”

King said that he has never approached the owners of the RVs as once they park their vehicles, they tend to disappear for the day, and on some, the number of commercial vehicles that park along that stretch can climb into the high twenties.

“These people have been abusing this area for too long. They had torn up the road, which had been repaved before these people turned up, and even backed into the golf course fence.”

King said that the area used to be used for people who wanted to park their cars and catch the bus to another part of the West Shore and would like to see that return.

“The council could give free parking to those parking for work, make it illegal to park these big commercial trucks and RVs – they are an eyesore.”

King said that the blame for this mess does not belong to the current council and mayor, and that this problem predated them, with the first RV turning up just before the pandemic.

“As far as I am concerned, neither council has done enough to sort this mess out.”



A section of the golf course fence which has been backed into and become an eyesore, according to Langford resident Ralph King. (Thomas Eley/News Staff)



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