

Not even Coronavirus can kill the Valentine's romance this February.

Love will never die!

12th February 2021 — By Ashleigh Clarke



Picture from Bloomsbury Flowers (Left). Picture from London Graze Company (right).

Covid-19 may have taken over the world and all conversations, but it certainly has not taken over the tradition of giving flowers and sweet treats on Valentine's Day. Many floral businesses and independent bakeries across central London are feeling the Valentine's Day boom in the run up to this romantic day.

As Valentine's Day approaches in the midst of lockdown, florists are finding themselves experiencing what business felt like pre Covid-19, with none stop orders to get through.

Florists were stuck like a rose between two thorns when Coronavirus forced the government to shut businesses, not only once but three times. The closures directed many businesses to get creative and adapt to the current situation by switching to as online orders, contact-free services and using social media to reach people who would usually be able to enter shops.

Florist, Mark, from Angel Flowers, says he has still been able to continue business and he and his family work in the shop to ensure all online orders get delivered. Despite all the challenges Covid-19 has brought upon Mark and his business, he remains resilient in these tough times: "We work in the shop to do make and prepare the flowers for the contact free deliveries and have a sign on the door, directing people to our website to place orders and let them know we are still up and running," says Mark.

This time last year couples were dining out, holidaying and doing all the 'normal' things associated with life pre the pandemic. Covid-19 had not even become a factor in the UK, as the virus was only just reaching our shores, and life still remained in pre Covid-19 normality. This year many people are forced to be apart from their loved ones or at least not be able to celebrate the same. As a result, businesses have had to adapt to ensure and remind people love is still in the air and not just the virus.

Online independent business, London Graze Company, creates and sells luxury savoury and sweet treat boxes and delivers around London for those who want to send a gift or indulge in themselves. Chloe Evans, co-founder of the business says after releasing an image of the Valentine's special graze box on social media they "didn't expect such an overload of orders because we are such a small business with not many followers yet.

"But I think a lot of people were searching online to send gifts," she adds.

The independent business has not had any financial government support. Nonetheless, Chloe Evans describe the valentine period as "extremely busy." Ms Evans and business partner say, they are not concerned about the future of the business failing due to the pandemic, but actually "only worried it [London Graze Company] will grow too much too soon for us [her and business partner] to keep up with."

According to a Finder report from early this year, "up to 40 million Brits (76%) will be celebrating Valentine's Day." Of those that celebrate this day, more than two in five give flowers.

A spokesperson from the British Florist Association says the reports they are getting at the moment are that pre ordering "is way up than it was the valentines last year" and florists are still able to meet all order deadlines."

She adds: "I think despite everything that has negatively impacted florists, this lockdown Valentines Day is very positive actually. As some people are not able to travel and see their family, they can rely on florists to use their skills and adaptability to be able to provide a heart-warming service.

"For online, retail and studio florists, business flow has been continuous because now more than ever, people want to be able to say I love you, and they seem to be doing this through little gestures like sending flowers, so for Mother's Day I think florists will be expecting a very busy time. However, for some like wedding and event florists it has been quite a struggle, because there has not been anything happening due to the restrictions."

For Independent business, Bloomsbury Florists, which specialises in events and weddings - with lockdown barricading the doors to big events, it has massively affected the business, resulting in the owner having to furlough the staff. Mark Welford, director of Bloomsbury Flowers says: "Normally the shop would be very busy given that we work with eight hotels, the Royal Opera House, many offices and restaurants as well as dealing with a lot of theatrical agents however all that side of our business has disappeared."

"The Valentines Days are usually very quiet for us as we would normally take orders for lots of offices in the area. This year it has been quite different as we have interestingly taken a lot more orders than usual, so it is looking quite good so far."

For many independent businesses out there, lockdown creates a challenging journey to get through, however it is with special occasions like Mother's Day and other celebrated days that give them a glimpse of hope that they will survive.

"If we can withstand this period and some sort of new normal is established so that us small businesses can continue sales, then maybe we will pull through this rough patch," Mr Welford says.

