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Bringing Something New to the Table: How Feast & Fettle Feeds Rhode Island

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Photo Courtesy Feast & Fettle.

By Courtney Gabrielson

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Carlos Ventura knows that meal delivery service is having a bit of a moment right now. As a result, the field's a bit crowded.

That hasn't stopped him from championing Providence-based [Feast & Fettle](#), which he argues is bringing something new to the table.

"First and foremost: there's no cooking required," said Ventura, who's CEO of the company. "[The meals are] ready to reheat and eat."

So, from a time-saving perspective, he argues that Feast & Fettle has everyone beat.

"It's really why people use our service," he continued. "For that, we're often categorized as a premium meal delivery service, [and] I don't mean just price, but I truly mean the quality of our product."

He raises a good point. After all, it doesn't matter how convenient one's meal service is if the food's terrible.

"Maggie started this business as a nanny, it exploded over the past two years, she developed a model that worked and we're looking to replicate it."

It's not. Feast & Fettle boasts a menu that changes every week, with main dishes and sides made to order. It makes sharing amongst family easier; consider how some folks like potatoes and others hate the taste, or have an allergy, or just feel like enjoying their roast beef without a forced side dish.

The methodology behind this was just one of the ways that Maggie Mulvena, the founder and executive chef of Feast & Fettle, brought her insight from time spent as a nanny to the business development table.

During her post-grad gig (she had studied to be a chef), the food she prepared for the family she served earned her rave reviews. Eventually, word of Maggie's talent spread to their friends, and before long Maggie founder herself preparing meals for around 10 to 12 other families.

Her success in this sphere helped her realize, with greater vigor, that "she really wanted to pursue [her] dream as feeding as many families as possible," Ventura said.

The solution? Meal delivery, where Maggie would prep the meals and send them out to hungry families.

"Meals by Maggie," as Feast & Fettle was originally known, started modestly in 2015, with an original roster of 9-10 families signing up. Since then, Ventura said that the property has "exploded," with 115 subscribers in the Rhode Island area today, and a team of five executive staff, six kitchen staff and four delivery drivers working behind the scenes.

In fact, 2017 revenue was \$231,000, a 144 percent jump from previous year. Customer retention rate was 40 percent, a figure that is ["almost double some industry competitors."](#)

Ventura credits strong word of mouth reviews with the company's user growth, as the team had done very little by way of marketing before 2018. Customers, who are typically busy professionals with young families, enjoy the fresh food, the ability to change their plans at any time and the pricing, Ventura said.

It doesn't hurt that that the food is also sourced locally, and Ventura said that the company aims to use organic ingredients "whenever possible," Ventura said.

While Maggie has seen tremendous success with Feast & Fettle due to her abilities as a chef and her smart business acumen, the results weren't achieved in a vacuum.

Feast & Fettle is a graduate of Hope & Main, a Warren-based food incubator, and Maggie and co. bootstrapped the company with help from a small friends and family fund since 2017.

"At a smaller scale, we are profitable; it's unheard of in the industry," Ventura said. Now, "we're now moving to a position where we do need outside funding in order to scale the business."

They've decided to get it [via crowdfunding](#). The program has a \$250,000 goal, with a \$50,000 minimum and a \$300,00 maximum. So far, it's raised a little of \$6,000 from 28 investors.

Feast & Fettle decided to go this way for a number of reasons, Ventura said.

"From a marketing standpoint, it gets your name out there," he continued, adding that the crowdfunding has a number of international contributors. "Also, it allows us to keep control of the business."

Besides the crowdfunding, Ventura said that the team will open a commercial kitchen in Providence in October, which will represent a big move for the group as they currently operate out of Hope & Main.

"When we think about expansion in our new kitchen, first and foremost, we need to serve our current clients," Ventura said. There's also thoughts of expanding their service area (currently, they cover the majority of the state).

"The story for us, is: Maggie started this business as a nanny, it exploded over the past two years, she developed a model that worked and we're looking to replicate it."

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