

California Small Business Development Centers

SUCCESS STORY # 322

*Small Business
Success
Is Our Business*

Vita Cucina: Rural NorCal Chefs Realize Culinary Dream

Vita Cucina

Devon & Michelle Morgante

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BACKGROUND

Vita Cucina, owned by Michelle and Devon Morgante, is a specialty kitchen store that teaches culinary classes, caters events, and sells cookware and related products in Crescent City. The Morgantes are both chefs who gained experience in the local food industry through a sales distribution company as well as coordinating cooking demonstrations in the already established Vita Cucina.

In 2008, the original owners of Vita Cucina had decided to sell, so the Morgantes consulted with Business Advisor Barbara Burke of the North Coast SBDC to consider their options.

CHALLENGES

Prior to this experience the Morgantes had never owned or managed a business themselves. Many questions came up regarding sales tax, how to address previously distributed gift certificates, the previous owner's profit margins and cost of goods

sold. Additionally, they had to acquire the appropriate a business and California Alcoholic Beverage licenses. Another important challenge was financing the purchase of the business.

ACTIONS

Their primary Business Advisor, Barbara Burke, conducted extensive research in order to provide them the information they needed to make informed decisions and referred them to important community contacts.

They attended various workshops as well as working with Burke to gain the necessary business acumen for their startup.

RESULTS

With the approval of a private loan in May 2008, the Morgantes purchased the business, successfully employing themselves. They created and followed a business plan, which included financial projections. The business plan's specific goals, coupled with consistent communication, lead them to ample sales and overflowing classes. By the end of their second year in business they had increased sales by 20 percent and added an employee to help manage the increasingly successful retail side of the business.



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