

The Raven Espresso Boutique

by Lorrie Boylen

Have you ever noticed that fabulous teal coloured 1969 vintage trailer by St. Michael's Church? That's The Raven Espresso Boutique, and Chantelle is waiting to serve up some tantalizing treats for your taste buds.

The café has been open for 1 year and 5 months, and she's been at St. Michael's for a year now. She used to move the trailer around to farmers' markets and other events, but her regular customers couldn't find her, so now she stays put and lets them come to her.

Chantelle has been a barista in the coffee world for 15 years and it's easy to recognize that it's her true passion. She always wanted to have her own café and explored Halifax, Fairview, and Dartmouth as potential locations. When she bought a house in Spryfield, she realized it was lacking a speciality coffee shop and would be the perfect place to set up her new business.

While she was still deciding on a location to open her new business, she kept seeing a lot of ravens and really took note of them. She took it as a good omen that she was making the right decision and decided to name her café after the bird. She found a storefront location in Spryfield, but when things fell through and she found the trailer, she knew it was meant to be. It was in great shape and even was equipped with a very rare propane powered manual espresso machine. She installed a permanent awning structure on the outside of the trailer to protect her customers during inclement weather.

Her goal is to bring the highest quality coffee at an affordable price. Having a trailer with low overhead allows her to keep her prices low. In fact, her regular coffee is same price as Tim Hortons, just \$2 tax included. She uses Java Blend coffee and her tea comes from the World Tea House. She has fresh baked goodies like scones, muffins, cookies and cheese-cake delivered every morning from Tart & Soul. One of her most popular sellers is the Breakfast Bagel, which is stretched out bagel dough, with an egg in the centre, cheddar and double smoked bacon.

If your mouth is watering but you're wondering if she can accommodate your dietary restrictions, have no fear! She offers vegan and gluten free options, as well as milk alternatives like soy, almond, coconut and oat, at no extra charge. And she can make your favourite coffee beverage iced or decaf.

Chantelle is very keen on giving back to the community. She has a donation jar for the Spryfield Farmer's Market token program, making it easy for her customers to help those less fortunate. Reaction has been positive, as people appreciate that it's going right back into our community.

Her tiny boutique supports local, and she sells cards created by local artist Kerry Hodgson and friendship bracelets and keychains created by A.J.'s bracelets. On display is a custom buoy created for the café by Nauti State of Mind. Although she doesn't sell these buoys from her trailer, some pieces are on display, along with business cards. The relationship with local artisans is a symbiotic one, as social media posts get cross-shared and everyone wins by gaining new customers.

She's one of the few (or possibly only) food truck that stays open all winter. Because she's propane powered, she's open even when the power is out. She recently began accepting debit and credit, which will make things much more convenient for customers in this age of cashless transactions.

You can find the Raven Espresso Boutique on Facebook and Instagram, where she posts once or twice a day with things like her scone of the day.

Be sure to swing by some day and check out the Raven Espresso Boutique. It's open Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and closed on Sunday. If you're moved to take a photo of this unique little café, please do! The café is very photogenic and Chantelle loves seeing the photos that people post on social media.

(Lorrie Boylen is a Writer, Administrative and Communications Professional and CBC Radio's Community Contact for Sambro)



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