

## Case Study

# Little Pops Pivots to Curbside and Delivery During Covid-19, Sees Remarkable Growth in Sales



Little Pops Pizza in Naperville, IL may be tucked away in a small strip center off the beaten path, but it is a popular destination for area residents longing for authentic New York pizza. With no prior restaurant experience, owners Mike and Vicki Nelson opened Little Pops in 2014 determined to share their family's New York Italian legacy with the Midwest audience in Illinois. Named after Vicki's Grandpa Berinato, who she called Little Pop, the restaurant blends family traditions and handed-down recipes to make the unique Italian dishes that customers return for time after time.

After opening the restaurant in a 1,200 sq/ft storefront with only delivery and carry-out, Mike and Vicki added a 60-seat dining room when an adjoining space became available. Dining in accounts for 35% of sales, carry-out comprises 50% and delivery contributes the other 15%.

As the restaurant became more successful, Mike and Vicki were determined to invest in the business to improve the food quality and streamline operations to become more profitable. A new Edge conveyor oven increased the throughput, quality and consistency of Little Pops pizzas. They purchased the Revention POS system to streamline online ordering and delivery operations, and to provide a central database for storing and managing customer information.



### Customer

Little Pops Pizza

### Challenge

Sustain restaurant sales volume during the Covid-19 crisis while keeping staff fully employed

### Results

By quickly shifting to a curbside pickup and delivery-only model, Little Pops was able to retain staff, grow sales during the pandemic, serve first responders, and build long-lasting customer goodwill.



## Challenge

When the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, Mike was fearful for the impact on his pizzeria. However, the Nelsons quickly developed a plan. Within 24 hours of the Illinois Governor’s order to close dine-in facilities, the Little Pops team converted the restaurant into a curbside pick-up and delivery-only concept built for volume and speed.

Within hours, the team:

- Converted the dining area to an operations center for staging and storage
- Secured extra freezer space to store additional food items and ingredients
- Converted the patio area to a curb pick-up area with six stations
- Designed a no-contact system using text messaging and voice calls to queue orders
- Initiated a gift card special offer – purchase a \$125 gift card for \$100 to secure additional cash
- Communicated with 5,000 contacts stored in the Revention POS system and 7,000 Facebook followers to announce Little Pops new protocols

**“We tore the dining room apart and converted it into storage and pick up stations,”** says Mike. **“We brought in two double-door coolers for extra cold storage and gained access to a vacant freezer in our complex to give us more capacity.”**

“For the no-contact pick up system, we have people text us their name and number when they arrive” adds Mike. “When their order is ready, we place it on a station then call the customer to let them know it is ready.” Mike retained his entire staff and repurposed his crews to man phones, expedite orders and communicate with customers. “We still have 20 people working on busy nights, and we have not missed a beat.”

## The Results

The results of Mike and Vicki’s swift actions have been astounding.

- Nightly pizza volume has increased from 200 - 250 to over 400
- Little Pops sold over \$22,500 in gift cards in the first 10 days
- Wait time for pizzas has increased to two hours at peak times for both pickup and delivery due to popularity

“We are fortunate in that we were able to communicate to our customers right away. Signing up customers for our Loyalty program and ensuring that we have current contact information in the Revention POS system has really paid off,” adds Mike. “We are learning how to use the Revention POS better every day to manage orders, keep customers happy and to set expectations on wait times.”



## Summary

The swift actions taken by Little Pops in response to the Covid-19 pandemic has not only allowed the restaurant to survive, but to thrive in ways not possible before. By rapidly changing the business model, Mike and Vicki and the entire Little Pops team were able to grow sales, gain new customers, build brand loyalty and strengthen a following that will pay dividends long after the pandemic has passed.

Always active in the community, Mike and Vicki launched a Front Line Heroes program to provide first responders and health care workers with food during this time of need. With help from suppliers and customers, Little Pops accepts donations to provide pizzas through the program. "Everyone wants to participate and be part of something," adds Mike. "I had one person donate \$500 for pizzas. She said when that runs out, she's happy to donate more!"



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