

Check out HuffPost's NEW BlackBerry app. Click here to download.

Browse the web as fast as you think. [Download Google Chrome](#)  chrome

THE HUFFINGTON POST  
**SMALL BUSINESS AMERICA**

# Baking Dreams Into Real Businesses (VIDEO)

This is the print preview: [Back to normal view »](#)



**The Huffington Post** Damiano Beltrami First Posted: 01/13/11 09:02 AM Updated: 01/13/11 09:02 AM



Filled with prune or cherry, Janine Frank's round, slightly sweet Kolachi pastries could come straight from an old-school Slovakian bakery. And Sherry Rousso's 2-inch-square vegan treats decorated with gold dust could come from a hip Williamsburg shop.

But these two delicacies come from the same place, an industrial building on a block in Long Island City, Queens: a street shared with rundown car washes and mechanics' garages.

Frank, a former real estate investor, and Rousso, a part-time agent for commercial cameramen, are among the 95 food makers who rent a spot at the kitchen of the Entrepreneur Space, an incubator for fledgling food operations and other businesses on 37th Street near Northern Boulevard.

The 5,500-square-foot commercial kitchen is a refuge for unemployed New Yorkers who want to start their own businesses, a laboratory for the ones who have jobs but would love to change gears, and a paradise for "slash careerists" - people who want to combine more than one career.

"Here we nurture small businesses until they become big enough to flap their wings and go out on their own," said Kathrine Gregory, coordinator and soul of the kitchen since 2005.

Scheduled to close down last summer, when the union-backed nonprofit group that sustained it could no longer afford to lease the space, the kitchen is still humming. The Queens Economic Development Corporation (QEDC) took over the facility last September. It invested \$100,000 in the venture and offered its business expertise to bakers like Frank and Rousso.

"We realized that this was a wonderful resource here in Long Island City," said Seth Bornstein, executive director of QEDC. "This goes back to our mission, creating jobs in Queens."

New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) provided QEDC with a \$170,000 grant to help subsidize the fit-out and development of the space, after which time it is expected to be self-sustaining. It is one of eight incubators that the City has launched across industry sectors to provide affordable space to start-ups and to facilitate networking among tenants. The City has launched more than 60 initiatives to support entrepreneurship and encourage start-up companies to locate and grow in New York City.

"From our industrial studies we find food to be one of the sectors in the manufacturing space that is still growing in New York," said Ann Li, Director at the Center for Economic Transformation at NYCEDC. "We wanted to ride that momentum and support that sector."

The kitchen solves many problems. It provides cooks with a space that they don't have at home, allows them to manufacture in volume; it's fully equipped and complies with all city health regulations. The operation also fosters partnerships with other entrepreneurs who rent offices in the same building, people who might help food entrepreneurs draft a marketing plan or keep their books.

The commercial kitchen is open 24/7 on a shift basis. The most expensive time slot runs from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (\$231), the cheapest from 1 a.m. to 7 a.m. (\$154).

"At first I was intimidated by all the machines and the equipment, but the staff here is wonderful, the facility is wonderful," Rousso said. "They are very supportive, it really is an incubating kind of establishment, I feel very nurtured here."

Gregory said that most of her clients have a real knack for cooking. They don't bake just bread. They make a kaleidoscope of products: hand-ground blue-corn tortillas, chocolate-covered pretzels, mini-falafel, granola, pickles and chutney, croquettes, and everything in between.

What all the people who show up at this kitchen have in common is a great passion for and commitment to what they do: "When you know you have something good and you feel it in your soul, you should go for it," said Frank, as she cut decadent triple-chocolate biscotti in small, round bits. "I just love making everyone happy, and this is my way of doing it."