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ENTREPRENEURS

Room for Food Startups to Grow

By Christina Scotti
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New York is known for its culinary excellence, just pick a farmer's market in any borough and you will stumble across incredible eats foodie entrepreneurs are creating --from vegan garlic dips to high-end Mexican sandwiches.

The latest hype to hit the culinary scene is locally-produced food, but it's often hard--not to mention expensive--for small businesses to find space to produce this food. And that's the problem The Entrepreneur's Space is trying to solve. The Queens-based, city-funded small business incubator provides commercial kitchen space for entrepreneurs.

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"What we're trying to do is take all these passionate food people out of their home kitchens and allow them to create their own business in a legal space," explained Kathrine Gregory, who oversees the 5,000 square-foot space.

The Entrepreneur's Space is open 24 hours, seven days a week and was funded by the Queens Economic Development Corporation. According to Executive Director Seth Bornstein, the city invested around \$375,000 in the facility in 2009.

"This creates jobs, and the more jobs in the city, the better," said Bornstein.

"GM isn't going to hire another 1,000 workers in New York City, so we need to look to small business growth."

Bornstein said there are currently 100 entrepreneurs producing their goods in the space. At any given time, the air is filled with the sweet scent of cupcakes from the popular truck Cake and Shake to Go-Go's garlic dip (that's sold in Wholefoods), and these startups are grateful to have this space.

"Without this, I couldn't survive," said John Gabore, owner of JAG Inc.

Gabore's product is niche-driven to say the least, he provides Asian-inspired food to different airline carriers.

"I couldn't rent my own space because it's too cost prohibitive," he said. "But here I can turn around and one week if I have to work seven days, I pay for seven days, which is fine. But the next week, I may only have to work two days, so it's helps me control my costs."

The Entrepreneur's Space makes money charging entrepreneurs on a per-shift basis. Prime time is the afternoon, which costs the most at \$230 an hour. The least expensive is the what Gregory refers to as "the graveyard shift," which runs from 1 a.m. to 7:30 am and costs \$150 an hour.

"We hope to be profitable in the next few months," said Gregory. "Self sustainability is key for us and we think we will get there."

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