

HAWAII SBDC SUCCESS STORY - EAST HAWAII CENTER



SUMTHING DIFFERENT, LLC

Doreen Harwin, owner of Sumthing Diffrent, LLC has dreamed of owning her own mobile food trailer for many years. While living on O’ahu, Doreen engaged in a similar business without the benefit of a mobile unit. Although she had a four day a week corporate job, she needed additional income. She served a meal to several ranch hands that she had hired to build a fence, and they insisted that she should sell her food. They said that their regular jobs only afforded them a 30-minute lunch break and they were so remotely located that they couldn’t get to and from the nearest take-out place and still have time to eat. Doreen reasoned that there were surely other people in similar circumstances and within six years, she was serving between 40-60 meals per day, two operational days per week and employing two to three part-time workers. People would describe her food to co-workers and friends as “gourmet food at plate lunch prices.”

Doreen eventually moved to the Big Island and trained in the Hawaii Community College Culinary Arts Program. She started a personal chef and catering business while waiting to find the perfect food trailer to suit her needs. With admirable determination and perseverance, Doreen worked tirelessly on her business plan for over two years. She conducted extensive market research and product testing in the Hilo community; securing commitments for delivery orders from over 20 businesses. The Hawaii SBDC helped her to make sense of the State and County regulatory requirements for operating a food truck on Hawaii Island. We also helped her to develop a marketing strategy, research and find locations, commercial kitchens, and develop a reasonable schedule of operations.

Expanding from the concept of the hurried ranch hand, Doreen now markets her food toward the health-conscious working professional, whether a hospital nurse or a busy mom, anyone looking for a quick, convenient, healthy alternative to the standard plate lunch. In eighteen years of working for FedEx, Doreen also acquired the skill of delivery route planning and expeditious execution. This is a pivotal element that allows her to successfully implement delivery service.

After investing in a trailer using personal funds and securing additional funding, Doreen began serving healthy plate lunches and dinners throughout the East side of Hawaii Island in May 2017. Doreen has brought her dream to life: she now operates two days a week and is starting to incorporate delivery service while maintaining catering and personal chef jobs as requested.