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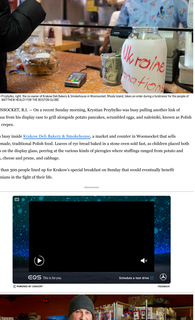
BUSINESS

Here's how Rhode Island's restaurants are supporting Ukraine

From serving vegan Holubtsi to selling Ukrainian wine, Rhode Island's hospitality industry is on the front lines of raising money and sending help to families and refugees overseas.

By Nina Gagosz Gross Staff | Updated March 7, 2022, 3:36 p.m.



A woman PICKS UP her bouquet of Ukraine flowers at Kitchen & Cocktail bar in Woonsocket. Photo taken after an order being emailed for the purchase of Ukraine. MATTHEW HEALY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

WOONSOCKET, R.I. — On a recent Sunday morning, Kyrylyna Pryylyka was busy prepping a colorful platter of kielbasa from his display case to grill alongside potato pancakes, scrambled eggs, and nalesniki, known as Polish sweet crepes.

It was busy inside Krakow Deli Bakery & Smokehouse, a market and counter in Woonsocket that sells homemade, traditional Polish food. Loaves of rye bread baked in a stone oven sold fast, as children placed both hands on the glass display, gazing at the various kinds of pierogies where stuffings ranged from potato and onion, cheese and prune, and cabbage.

More than just people lined up for Krakow's special breakfast on Sunday that would eventually benefit Ukrainians in the fight of their life.

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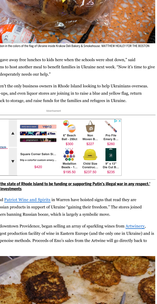

A woman PICKS UP her bouquet of Ukraine flowers at Kitchen & Cocktail bar in Woonsocket. MATTHEW HEALY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Owners Pryylyka and his sister Marta Sumak came to the US from Poland in the 1990s, and remember the treachery of the Soviet Union. As they observe the Russia-Ukraine War across the Atlantic Ocean, they are desperate to help.

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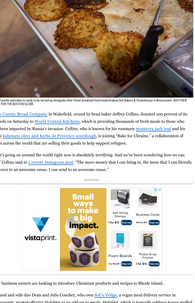
"I still have friends in Ukraine. Those people are our neighbors [in Poland]," Pryylyka said recently. "We are blessed to be here in the United States and have enough food to eat. Now it's time to help them."

While also collecting items like paper towels, personal toilettes, and other supplies, all of the proceeds Krakow raised on Sunday went to help refugees in Ukraine fleeing for Poland. According to recent counts, nearly 2 million Ukrainians have fled their home country for neighboring Poland, which is mostly women and children.



A woman PICKS UP a pierogi with potato filling at the counter of Krakow Deli Bakery & Smokehouse. MATTHEW HEALY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

"During the pandemic, we gave away free lunches to kids here when the schools were shut down," said Pryylyka, who said he plans to hold another meal to benefit families in Ukraine next week. "Now it's time to give back in another place that desperately needs our help."

Pryylyka and his sister aren't the only business owners in Rhode Island looking to help Ukrainians overseas. Restaurants, markets, pop-ups, and even liquor stores are joining in to raise a blue and yellow flag, return Russian-branded spirits back to storage, and raise funds for the families and refugees in Ukraine.

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Irish Liqueurs in Bristol and Patriot Wine and Spirits in Warren have boisted signs that read they are temporarily boycotting Russian products in support of Ukraine "gaining their freedom." The stores joined thousands of business owners banning Russian boozes, which is largely a symbolic move.

But Gary's Fine Wines, in downtown Providence, began selling an array of sparkling wines from Artemovsk, which derives from the largest production of wine in Eastern Europe (and the only one in Ukraine) and is crafted using classic Champagnoise methods. Proceeds of Gary's sales from the Artemovsk will go directly back to Ukrainian families.

A bottle of Artemovsk sparkling is ready to be served as alongside other Polish breakfast food inside Krakow Deli Bakery & Smokehouse in Woonsocket. MATTHEW HEALY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

South County Bread Company in Wakefield, owned by head baker Jeffrey Collins, donated rye percent of its proceeds on Saturday to World Central Kitchens, which is providing thousands of fresh meals to those who have been impacted by Russia's invasion. Collins, who is known for his rosemary pumpernickel and kaiser bun rolls, also served Ukrainian-inspired pierogies and borscht.

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Other business owners are looking to introduce Ukrainian products and recipes to Rhode Island.

Husband and wife duo Dean and Julie Czuchry, who own Sola's Vodka, a vegan-owned delivery service in Narragansett, started offering Holubtsi as an add-on to meals. Holubtsi, which is typically cabbage leaves stuffed with rice and vegetables (and sometimes meat) and baked in tomato sauce, is a traditional Ukrainian dish. They seasoned the stuffed cabbage heavily, with garlic, onion, and pepper, so all customers had to do was reheat them.

By selling Holubtsi for $18 each, they raised more than $700 in less than a week, and then matched the donation to send $1,400 to United Help Ukraine, an American nonprofit that has raised money and awareness of Russia's attacks on Ukraine since 2014. Dean Czuchry said the funds will be used to help refugees fleeing Ukraine with shelter, clothing, first aid and other medical supplies, and food.

"Each month, we chose a community or organization to give back to. After seeing what was going on in Ukraine over the last few weeks, we knew we needed to do something," Julie Czuchry said on a recent call.

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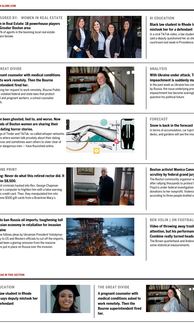
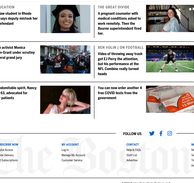


Sonia Dyrnyuk, owner of Sola's Vodka is holding a bottle of the Nemiroff Vodka, which derives from a 250 year old Ukrainian distillery. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

At Bellini Providence, inside the newly opened Hotel Beatrice, owner and former mayor Joseph Paolino has scattered bouquets of sunflowers, the national flower of Ukraine, across the dining room and behind the bar. Last week, a shipment of Nemirroff Premium Vodka, which comes from Ukraine's oldest and largest distilleries dating back nearly 250 years ago, arrived at the restaurant.

Pavilion, the former US ambassador to Malta in the mid-1990s, said his relatives immigrated to the US from Italy in search of a better life.

"This genuine wasn't more mountain, but I hope that this small art expresses our support and love of the Ukrainian people," said Pavilion.



Gabriel Pavilion's Hotel Beatrice has scattered sunflower displays, which are the national flower of Ukraine, around the entire restaurant. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

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