

# Lockdown hobby becomes successful Tyneside promenade pizza business Ritrovo

A former factory manager in South Tyneside has turned a lockdown hobby into a successful start-up pizza business.

Jonnie Halling has a strong background in food production, having spent the last eight years managing the factory at Minchella & Co in South Shields.

He developed a love for pizza-making during the pandemic and has now realised his ambition to run his own business, after teaming up with Louisa Smith, owner of Smith's Seaview Café, who shared his vision of growing a business facing the promenade.

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Since opening on South Shields promenade in October, takeaway firm Ritrovo has been doing a roaring trade serving Roman 'Al Taglio' inspired pizza slices.

And as the pair are passionate about South Shields, their artisan pizzas take inspiration from other local businesses – with a particular favourite being the Oi Oi Slice, topped with a Dickson's saveloy.

The business has recently utilised the Seaview Café's outdoor space to create an informal eating and drinking area with roof covering and pergola, and it has received an excellent response in its first few weeks of trading, selling 192 slices on its first day.

Mr Halling said: "Over the last few years there has been a real movement in South Shields with the rise of independent food vendors who pride themselves with honest, artisan food.

We're thrilled to be working alongside the likes of Wolfman's, Willie's Burgers, Bessie's Sweet Bakes, Up North Pizza, Zlich and The Harton Hop House – to name a few.

“It is important for us as a business to champion South Tyneside and the businesses within it.

“Like many, lockdown was a time to slow down and reflect and ultimately sparked my passion for pizza making – using the time to experiment and perfect the pizza dough. The initial response to Ritrovo has been incredible and we have ambitious plans looking ahead to 2022, with hopes of starting a delivery service across the North East and to collaborate with other local food businesses on unique pizza concepts.”

Coun Mark Walsh, lead member for regeneration and economy at South Tyneside Council said: “It's wonderful to see a new quirky business thrive in South Shields and we wish Ritrovo every success as we head into the new year.”

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