

Location:

125 West Main Street
Mount Pleasant, PA 15666
theglutenfreeoven.net

County:

Westmoreland

Description:

Business Development

Total Project Cost:

\$170,300



The Gluten Free Oven



People:

The restaurant Marie's Place specializes in pizza, and Marie Murphy loves a challenge. So when a dietician urged her to make pizza free of gluten – a wheat protein intolerable for those with celiac disease and sometimes avoided by people with autism and health problems – she gave it a try. Since then, she's helped customers enjoy their first pizzas in years, and children sample their first pizzas ever. "They're not left out anymore," she says.

Progress:

Soon schools and stores began ordering her pizzas, so Marie and co-owner, Jeffrey Ehrlich decided to turn a former car wash into a gluten-free bakery. Three banks couldn't fit their plans into their guidelines. A former client of The Progress Fund told them to call there. The Progress Fund loaned them \$80,000.

Impact:

Marie and Jeffrey are going beyond pizza to bread, cookies and cakes that appeal not just to celiacs, but to anyone conscious of the benefits of gluten-free food. They are planning to add café seating and a baking classroom. Though their products may be missing gluten, their taste lacks nothing. "It would be our ultimate goal that when a customer comes through the door," says Marie, "that they do not recognize the difference."

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