

# BRAND<sup>TM</sup> POINTS Plus



*Proudly Supporting the Canadian Foodservice Industry*



## 100% TAKEOUT

*Lord Elgin Fish & Chips, a family-owned fish and chips restaurant located in Port Elgin, Ont., will be celebrating 40 years of serving the community this May. Owner-operator Mike Lemcke grew up in the business and, with his wife Janet, bought out his parents 22 years ago. The 3,500 sq. ft. restaurant with 145 seats appeals mainly to a family and seniors crowd.*

*Mike spoke to Brand Points Plus about how Lord Elgin Fish & Chips has been able to pivot quickly from dine-in with some takeout to 100% takeout:*

**What was business like for you before the coronavirus hit?**

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Winter is normally slow for us and we close for five weeks at Christmas, usually reopening the last week or two of January. We had just reopened and managed to get through February. Then in March just as business started to pick up, COVID-19 hit. Usually each month gets busier from March to June, then July and August are crazy busy, come September things start to slow down again, and each month from September to December things get considerably slower. Takeout sales generally varied from 15%-25% of our daily business.

## **When did you see the handwriting on the wall and decide to convert to takeout and delivery?**

We converted to takeout on the Tuesday the Ontario government mandated dining rooms to close. We still haven't started delivery as we have set up a very safe pickup procedure that's working well. If we see that people are no longer willing to pick up their orders, we will consider delivery. [Check out [Lord Elgin's Facebook page](#) to see how easy they've made it to pick up and go.]

## **What was your first reaction when you realized you'd have to make this change?**

We knew we could make the change quickly and just had to perfect the system. We had to adjust it a few times as we kept finding little things to change to make everything run smoother.



## **What steps did you have to take to convert your operation?**

Five years ago, we developed a frozen battered fish product that customers can buy and cook in their oven. We have slowly increased the sales each year. This product has been very popular since restaurants had to convert to takeout only. We have added our homemade frozen fries to this product line temporarily.

## **What changes have you had to make to staffing?**

We decided to lay off our staff and run the business with just our family of four. We have many kitchen staff who live with vulnerable people so they didn't want to work. We decided to open only Thursday, Friday & Saturday, 12-7, to funnel as much business as we can into three days to limit our overhead. We took a few items off the menu with short shelf life to limit the amount of food waste.

## **What challenges have you faced in converting to takeout?**

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No real challenges, but we continue to rearrange the kitchen to make it more efficient for takeout. It has been interesting seeing how quickly and easily we were able to adapt to takeout only. Luckily, we already did takeout so we had all the packaging figured out already. We got the word out to our customers that we were switching to takeout mostly through Facebook and our big LED road sign. We make sure we attach a special thank you to each order for the support during this time.

### **Are your efforts bearing fruit? How have you measured success?**

We are very happy with where we are at this point. Obviously, our sales are down considerably, but so are our expenses.

### **Lord Elgin Fish & Chips' top tips:**

- Trimming costs and limiting any waste is more important now than ever before.
- Look at every little cost including how often you get garbage pickup.
- If you find you are not very busy, reduce the days you are open.
- If you have a product people want, they will come the few days you are open and you can reduce operating expenses.
- Consider adding other items to your takeout menu.



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