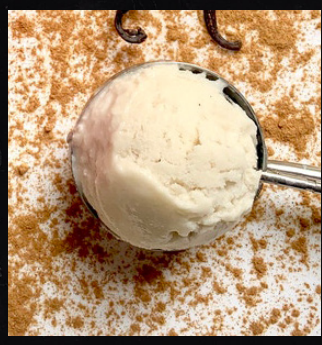
PASTRY | BAKING | CHOCOLATE | BREAD | FROZEN

Pastry Arts

SUMMER 2020 · ISSUE 8



SURVIVING COVID-19

Pivots, Lessons & Advice for Enduring the Global Pandemic

RISA MAGID BOYER

Chef-Owner, Vanillamore, Montclair, NJ

Vanillamore.com

What types of uncertainties have given you the biggest headache as it relates to being a business owner?

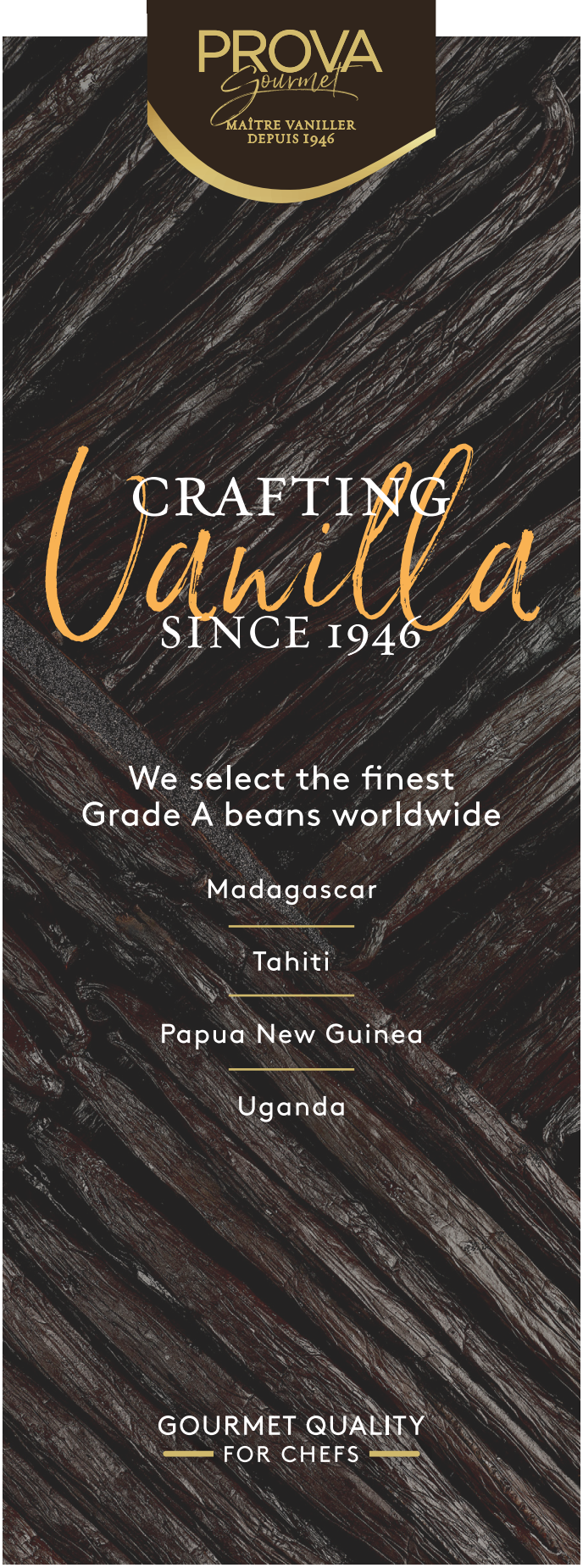
The biggest uncertainty is what the 'new normal' will look like. Our brand is built on the basic foundation of hospitality, as most restaurants are. The prospect of wearing a mask impedes the ability to approach guests with a warm smile. Our menu has been created in a very social way – small plates meant to be shared at the table – which is obviously everything that we are working to avoid now. Rethinking how to approach our 'Sweet. Savory. Social.' brand is daunting, but we have an opportunity to create a more curated experience for smaller groups, and I think that people are craving an experience like that after being home for so long. Safety is number one in this climate, but I have always been insistent on staying true to the Vanillamore brand.

How have you dealt with these uncertainties as you've evolved as a business owner?

Being a small business owner requires you to be resilient, persistent and flexible. This is true on a minute-by-minute basis while operating the restaurant. This is still true now. We have to re-imagine who we are within the current constraints. During this time, we have re-focused efforts on e-commerce. Our business plan always included a retail revenue stream, but it was put on the back burner as our focus was needed on daily restaurant operations. During this time, we have been able to enhance what we already developed. It's also an opportunity stay connected to our network by selling some of our favorite items through our website. Recently, we have also started to incorporate some more perishable items for pick-up at the restaurant. We've created a single serving jar version of some of our dessert flights from Vanillamore's dessert menu. For the past year, I've also been writing a cookbook. The process has been long and challenging, but having to step back from our regular operations has given me the chance to make huge strides in getting the book closer to completion. Focusing on the silver-linings is not easy, but is necessary in order to stay positive.

What's the best advice you can give to new business owners in relation to dealing with uncertainties in business?

I believe that all business owners have a passion so strong that it can't be broken, otherwise they would not be in the place that they are. My best advice is to keep looking forward, not just in the short term, but the long term. With a long term view, the short term mistakes are just learning experiences.



Contact
gourmet@provaus.com
978 739 9055
www.provagourmet.com
Follow us on social media