

‘Necessity is the mother of invention.’ New valley businesses open up during the pandemic

<https://www.desertsun.com/story/money/business/2020/11/25/new-palm-springs-area-small-businesses-opening-heading-into-2021/6378540002/>

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Palm Springs Desert Sun



In a year marred by a historic recession and heartbreak for local businesses, a record number of new businesses are opening up — including some entrepreneurs in the Coachella Valley.

[The U.S. Census Bureau](#) said nearly 1.57 million businesses applied for an employer identification number in July, August and September of 2020, which is a tax filing number for new businesses. That's about 77% more filings than in the third quarter of 2019, when around 859,000 new businesses launched.

In California, where roughly 10% of the nation's new businesses are located, more than 153,000 employer identification numbers were created in the third quarter, representing a nearly 72% increase compared to the same timeframe in 2019.

Josh Bonner, chief executive officer of the Greater Coachella Valley Chamber of Commerce, said the widespread layoffs and economic upheaval brought on by the coronavirus pandemic have driven many people to consider new ways to make a living.

"Necessity is the mother of invention, and that's what we're seeing right now," he said. "People aren't going to throw up their hands and say 'I give up.'"

Some new businesses are service-oriented and respond to new demands, like the new sanitation service Environmental Protection Solutions launched by local business owner [Mario Hernandez of Mario's Tile Care & Concrete Cleaning](#).

[Palm Springs LGBTQ+ film festival, Cinema Diverse, returns with online streaming, drive-in screenings 2021 Rancho Mirage Writers Festival canceled, rescheduled for 2022 Want to have a say in where you can vote? Riverside County seeks input Cathedral City votes to phase out short-term rentals by 2023](#)

Many shops have doubled down on digital marketing or online ordering to keep their businesses going at a time when people are increasingly shopping online.

[CV Harvest Box](#), a new venture from farmer Mark Tadros and restaurateur Tony Marchese, provides locally grown delivered produce and other goods while addressing the host of crops that would otherwise be purchased by restaurants operating at their past capacity.

And then there are some new businesses that have opened as previously planned, Bonner said, like the new Vallarta Supermarket in Indio.

But the openings come in the shadow of heartbreak for many other business owners; [a widely cited Yelp survey from September](#) found 60% of businesses that were closed in the fall were unlikely to re-open. The NFIB Research Center found [90% of small business owners](#) have already spent their loans from the Paycheck Protection Program disbursed earlier this year as part of the CARES Act with no clear path ahead for future federal aid.

The Opportunity Insights Economic Tracker shows that nearly 32% fewer businesses are open in California as of the beginning of November compared to January 2020.

Renewed push to shop local

But people are still shopping and buying; consumer spending is down by about 5% through mid-November compared to the start of the year, the tracker shows.

In anticipation of the holiday season spending, the Greater Coachella Valley Chamber of Commerce has launched a "shop local" marketing campaign with a website — www.cvshoplocal.com — and digital, television and radio advertising.

Bonner said the goal of the campaign is to remind people to take a few extra minutes in planning their shopping to see if they can make their purchase at a local business. The chamber says \$68

of every \$100 spent at locally owned businesses stays in the community, compared to \$43 for the same amount spent at a chain store.

Bonner acknowledges how easy it is for people who are shopping to use Google or Amazon to find gifts and deals, but he said the chamber is hoping to shift those habits toward local businesses.

"One of our big pushes this year is definitely going to take a little bit of extra time and try to locate your local store's website," Bonner said.

And if there is a physical location that's is open? "Mask up, be safe, and you can still go out to some of the local stores," Bonner said.

Here's a look at several new businesses that have opened up in the desert since the pandemic started.

Biscuit and Counter

Biscuit and Counter



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Photos: Biscuit and Counter wows desert foodies

When longtime chef Lance Velasquez and Marlo Sandler fulfilled their dream of moving to the desert from the Bay Area in August 2020, they brought their Biscuit and Counter business with them.

When the pandemic sidelined dining this spring, longtime chef Lance Velasquez got to making biscuits as a way to pass time and indulge his passion for southern cuisine. Then when he and Marlo Sandler fulfilled their dream of moving to the desert from the Bay Area in August, they brought their new business with them.

Since then Biscuit and Counter has been wowing desert foodies with their classic buttermilk option and variety of sweet or savory flavors, like cinnamon maple or cheddar cornmeal.

Sandler said they've been heartened by the warm welcome from customers and fellow entrepreneurs.

“We’ve been blown away by how welcoming the artisan food community has been,” she said. “Within the first few weeks, we’ve been doing a lot of swapping with other bakers or coffee makers.”

The biscuits are available each day at Grand Central Palm Springs, a café in downtown Palm Springs, where Velasquez bakes in the morning. Biscuit brunch dishes are also available at The Cole Hotel, 2323 N Palm Canyon Dr, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on weekends, with take-out or patio dining available.

Their biscuits are also available by the baker's dozen and ordered through their Instagram page, [@biscuitandcounter](#), or through the CV Harvest Box.

Gabino's Creperie

A new creperie opened up in Palm Springs during the pandemic, with pick-up or to-go options available of their savory delicacies.

The shop serves up a thin dough wrapped around into a cone shape around sandwich-style ingredients, like a barbecue chicken with crispy onions, corn, tomato, lettuce, and a secret sauce.

Pickup or delivery options are available, with a 20% discount offered Saturday, according to a promotion posted on their Facebook page.

Gabino's is located at 170 East Palm Canyon Drive in Palm Springs. Hours are Tuesdays through Thursdays 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Fridays and Saturdays 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Vagabond Roasting Company

Vagabond Roasting Company



Casey Ruiz, who grew up in the Coachella Valley, opened up Vagabond Coffee Roasters in 2020.

COURTESY OF VAGABOND COFFEE ROASTERS

Business partners Casey Ruiz and Kaley Perez were dreaming of driving a 1981 Vanagon across the country and selling coffee before the pandemic hit. In January, they started hosting mobile coffee pop-ups for Vagabond Roasting Company, but then the pandemic hit.

Ruiz previously spent several years working as a barista but during the pandemic found himself without a job and in isolation. That's when he decided to make the leap to coffee roaster, and spent the spring studying videos and experimenting.

“I spent weeks in my room, on my laptop, watching videos, researching, taking in as much knowledge as I could,” Ruiz said.

Since then, he's become a premier small-batch roaster in the desert and has partnered with several local businesses.

His coffee can be found at the Palm Springs Farmer's Market on Saturdays, and at the La Quinta Farmer's Market on Sundays. Beans and other products can be ordered online at www.vagabondroasting.com.

Windmill City Super #1



Windmill City Super #1 opened in October 2020 in downtown Palm Springs, one of a crop of new local businesses forging a way through during ...

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PHOTO BY REYNALDO ROMERO

While running one of the Coachella Valley's go-to print shops and after helping launch a small business support program during the pandemic, Ashley Busenius Coy and Glen Coy of Windmill City Screen Printing this year opened a retail shop in downtown Palm Springs — just in time for holiday gift-giving and a resurgence of shop-local ethos.

Windmill City Super #1 opened up on Oct. 2, where they sell printed merchandise like hats, tees, socks and sweatshirts. Shelves are also stocked with quirky and desert-themed goods from other local entrepreneurs, ranging from pint glasses to candles to keychains.

To celebrate Small Business Saturday, the shop is partnering with their next-door neighbor, Las Palmas Brewing, with the launch of the "Someplace Special" limited-edition capsule collection. In addition to featuring a bespoke design for merchandise that will be for sale at Super #1, Las Palmas will launch their Special beer, a new West Coast IPA.

As of Saturday, online ordering also will be available at www.windmill.city.

The shop is located at 463 North Palm Canyon Drive. Saturday hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and the shop is open Thursday through Sunday. Hours and days may change come December, with details available on their Instagram page, [@super.number.one](https://www.instagram.com/super.number.one)

Hula's Palm Desert

Hula's Palm Desert



At a time when many restaurants are struggling to stay open, Hula's Palm Desert opened in September 2020.

The restaurant serves Asian Hawaiian barbecue and ...

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COURTESY OF JERRY WONG

Jerry and Sandy Wong opened up their new Asian Hawaiian barbecue restaurant in Palm Desert in September that's quickly become a hit with desert diners. With dishes like ribs, fried rice, chicken wings, and lettuce wraps, Hula's became Yelp's No. 1 recommended restaurant in Palm Desert as of late November.

"We've been very blessed, we have a lot of support from your community," Jerry Wong told The Desert Sun.

The restaurant is located at 36-901 Cook Street and is open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Art on Main Street

Art on Main Street



Photos: La Quinta's Art on Main Street offers gallery for local art

With COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings, Old Town La Quinta is offering local artists a gallery where they can display and sell their works.

With the pandemic sidelining many gatherings and shows for local artists, Old Town La Quinta has a new pop-up gallery that shoppers can visit under current protocols. The Art on Main Street gallery features works from an array of different artists, and is open Thursdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sundays from 9 a.m. to 1 pm.

For Small Business Saturday, the gallery as well as all the other shops in Old Town La Quinta are offering a \$20 gift certificate to anyone who spends \$100 or more.

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