

# CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

## Brampton Entrepreneur Vernon D'Mello serves up Pizza that Taste like Home



This month's client spotlight is Vernon D'Mello, the CEO of RAPIZZA, a pizza shop in the GTA that rapidly delivers sophisticated international cuisine in the comfort of a pizza. Their chefs take inspiration from all over the world to create east and west fusion menus. In just one year, they have opened seven locations across the GTA!

### Starting his Entrepreneurship Journey

Vernon was not always an entrepreneur. He worked in a corporate marketing role until 2015 when he lost his job due to downsizing. ***"I didn't know what to do. I was really scared,"*** Vernon explains. Pushing past the fear, he started his own digital marketing agency, 1ADZ, while driving for Uber and Skip The Dishes to make ends meet.

These jobs meant interacting with lots of different people each day. As an innovative thinker, Vernon saw this as an opportunity to build the clientele for his business. ***"So, I took an A4 size paper and printed on it, 'your Uber driver knows more about the internet than you, ask him a question.'"*** People took notice, started a conversation, and slowly but surely he built a network of clientele in need of his marketing expertise. "I was the Uber driver with a suit on, and the guy to help people solve their problems. I think that really resonated," he explains. Since then, Vernon has continued 1ADZ, collaborated with friends to run a restaurant, among other ventures. In one way or another, each of his endeavours focus on serving the needs of people in the community.



## COVID19 - An Opportunity to Build a Brand

After years of being an entrepreneur, developing new ideas has become second nature for Vernon. As an immigrant from Poona, India, he noticed that the flavours of home always transport him to a happy place. ***“Even if it was just for a minute, I would eat the food and go back to a happy place,”*** he explains. So in 2020, while other businesses were closing up shop, he decided to start RAPIZZA to give people the feeling of home away from home.

When executing big ideas, having the right team is crucial. This is why Vernon invested in a team of professors to help him develop an array of international recipes. As he explains, ***“there was a time when I must have tasted more than a 100 different types of pizza! But it was worth it, we’ve developed flavours that are amazing!”*** To get the brand to where it is today, he uses a franchising business model. Clients provide the capital, and he provides them with a fully operational franchise. Some of the flavours include butter chicken, tandoori shrimp, roasted cauliflower, and lamb seekh kebab, among many others. They develop each recipe with the cultural diversity of the GTHA in mind.



Starting a franchise that serves fresh ingredients, unique product offerings, and employees 36 people and counting has been a continuous process of obstacles and lessons learned. Thankfully, Vernon has the support of his business partners, family, and the Brampton Entrepreneur Centre (BEC) to help along the way. He credits Daniel Bishun, one of BEC's business advisors, for connecting him with key resources and opportunities across the City of Brampton. As he explains, ***"the pandemic has taught us a lot... but we've been blessed with amazing people around us who believe in our idea."***

In the spirit of paying it forward, RAPIZZA has partnered up with Milton District Hospital and SickKids to start a #ServeTheServer campaign. Through this initiative, people can gift a meal to frontline healthcare staff. In addition, 5% of all revenue generated through this campaign is being donated to SickKids!



### Advice and Future Plans

Vernon's entrepreneurship journey is a great example of the powers of consistency and creative problem solving when chasing a dream. Even as he continues to build his pizza empire, he already has two ideas for new businesses in development! For those interested in starting their own business, Vernon says to remember that ***"you can achieve what you want to achieve by doing the right thing...stand by it, stick by it. People will believe in you because you stick by your guns."***

***To get a taste of RApiZZA's imaginative flavours you can visit their website, Instagram, or Facebook page.***