

Toast! Of Charleston is serving up more than just breakfast. Owner Sam Mustafa has created the Full Belly, Full Hearts initiative to provide hot meals to hospitality workers and their families, as well as overworked healthcare providers and first responders.

“If we can do something instead of waiting for something to happen, we’re going to do it.”

Full Belly, Full Hearts at Toast!

Forced to lay off 330 employees during the first two weeks of COVID-19, Mustafa spent one sleepless night brainstorming ways he could take care of his community.

Full Belly, Full Hearts was conceptualized that Wednesday morning. By Friday Mustafa had already set up a partnership with their food supplier. Come Monday, March 30th, the Full Belly, Full Hearts initiative was up and running.

During the first two days, Toast! served 1,500 free meals.

“I felt like this was my calling to be able to do something. That’s where Fully Belly, Full Hearts came in. We don’t want anybody to go hungry. We’ll take care of them, just like they take care of us,” Mustafa said. “We have to do our part while this is happening. Here, today.”

How Does It Work?

Toast! locations are spread out across the low country – downtown, Summerville, West Ashley, and Mount Pleasant – and are open from 8AM to 8PM. Each restaurant designs their daily menu around the food they’ve received from their suppliers.

Anyone can walk into Toast!, let the staff know they’ve been laid off and receive a free meal. Those with families just need to let the staff know how many are in their household. It’s that simple.

Many who have received free meals have also shared their stories with Mustafa and his staff, bringing an overwhelming sense of hope, knowing that “if we take care of each other, this will pass.”

Despite the overwhelming hardships many are facing, the Charleston community grows stronger as initiatives like Fully Belly, Full Hearts and Pay It Forward Charleston create heartfelt connections.

Toast! Is Committed to Remaining Open – But Needs Your Support

As restaurants begin to open up patios and – in some cases – indoor dining, Toast! is dedicated to continuing their efforts to support the hospitality community through Full Belly, Full Hearts – but they can't do it without the support of Charleston.

Dependent on the tourism industry for most of their traffic, Toast! saw a sharp decline in sales immediately after COVID-19 hit. Though delivery orders were expected to increase, the initial panic surrounding take-out caused most to flock to grocery stores instead. This, combined with

the 30% cut that most delivery services like Uber Eats and DoorDash take as well as the general overhead costs of takeout models, forced Mustafa to close half of his restaurants in the low country. Toast!, Queology and John King Grill have remained open.

Despite everything, Mustafa's main priority was to design daily discounted menus built around the supplies they had and the needs of their customers. Family meals were quickly put together to provide people with hope, a sense of normalcy, and the low country fare we all know and love.

With socially distanced patio dining now available, they hope to see many of their regulars from a safe distance and have prepared adequately.

Things might not be back to normal just yet, but at least there's still brunch.

Brunch At Toast! Is More Than Just A Treat

What was once a weekend indulgence is now an easy way to help our favorite restaurants stay open. If you've never been, Toast! makes breakfast an all day treat. Their southern home-made dishes are meant to bring comfort and joy any time of day – and especially these days.

Voted the Best of the Best by Charleston Magazine and a NY Times must-eat, their menu features everything you could possibly want – from Deluxe Stuffed French Toast topped with apple or peach cider syrup, to simple and savory but far from ordinary shrimp and grits.

Ask anyone who's been and they'll agree – Toast! knows how to transform a meal into an experience. Call ahead to place your order for pickup or dine on their patio any day of the week, from 8AM to 8PM.

By Samantha Paternoster | May 14th, 2020 |
