

My name: Hamed Allahyari

My town: Sunshine

My COVID19 experience

I have a Persian café in Melbourne. I employ Asylum Seekers and Refugees, people who are in a very difficult position. I give opportunity to people who is most needed. I am also an Asylum Seeker. I have 10 workers, eight of them got Job Seeker payments and were okay. Two of them had a really difficult time. They didn't have any income, so I gave them a small job during COVID19.

The business was scary during COVID. I had a business partner until March and then I was on my own and that was okay, and I was happy. But then COVID came and it wasn't easy. The Café had to close for customers. I started some online cooking classes and took advantage of everyone on Zoom. I was doing the cooking classes in person before. I had a big audience and they wanted to continue. So, I put the cooking classes online and they were popular. That was good.

I also did takeaway menu. I had to do that to survive. It wasn't profit – it was just to pay rent and bills. There wasn't enough income coming to make a profit, but I could pay the bills. As a restaurant owner it was very quiet. It was hard to survive. I am so glad that things are much better now.

Right now, I am decorating my café. My Cafe is called Café Sunshine and SalamaTea and it is in Sunshine. I am a Chef and I love to make traditional Persian food. Right now we are closed for Christmas and I am decorating the café. In Persian culture we celebrate Yaldā Night, the longest and darkest night in the Northern Hemisphere. I have a traditional Persian photo that I am putting that on the wall to decorate the Café. It makes me very happy. I want to change the vibe in the Café.

An act of intersectional kindness

During COVID it was very difficult in the business. One day I collected the mail and there was a letter from Sydney from a man I don't know. He sent me \$200 and said he was sorry it was hard and hoped that things would get better. That was so sweet. He had never been to my café, he saw me on TV and send me cheque. I made baclava for him and some Persian sweets to him as a thank you and I sent to him to the address on the envelope.

Also we had some good news. The City of Yarra asked us if we would help with catering for the New Years eve party in Edinburgh Gardens. This is very good news. This is a great opportunity for us. We are doing Salamat Picnic for people and I am very excited to have this opportunity. I will share with you a photograph of the picnic.

My café: <https://www.facebook.com/CafeSunshineAndSalamaTea/>

thekindnesspandemic.org/hopecalendar