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DEMARCO'S FINE FOODS CELEBRATES 2 YEARS: FROM FRUIT STOCKER TO SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR

Windsor, ON

At age 16 Ray DeMarco walked into a small local grocery store to start his shift stocking fruit and breaking down boxes trying to earn money for university and to buy the long awaited FIFA 2006 video game. While he stood at the wooden stall dutifully and meticulously placing the crisp Niagara peaches on the shelf, thoughts of his future entered into his mind. What would become of his future, where would he work, what would he be doing?

Eleven years later, Ray would find himself driving to 1349 Grand Marais Rd. to make one of the most important decision of his life. As he stepped out of his car he stopped to admire the sprawling commercial plaza before him, standing before him was the infamous former N&D complex in South Windsor's Yorktown Plaza, a former pinnacle of grocery store excellence for almost 40 years. He walked toward the front door filled with a mix of nervousness and excitement, walking through the door he was taken aback by the large empty space. After a quick look around the empty building Ray smiled to his fiancée (now wife) Felicia and said "this is it, this is the location of DeMarco's Fine Foods." Putting pen to paper, Ray DeMarco now became the owner of what has become one of the fastest growing and successful small businesses in Windsor-Essex.

DeMarco's Fine Foods opened on April 7, 2018 to an excited crowd of South Windsor shoppers looking to buy fresh produce and local products down the street from their house for the first time in almost 15 years. Since opening, DeMarco's Fine Foods has seen a steady increase in the amount of customers stopping in everyday to check out the new products, pick up fresh produce, or to be greeted by a friendly face. DeMarco's Fine Foods has reinvigorated the neighbourhood grocery shopping experience, their customers continue to marvel at the variety of product choices and customer service that can only be found in the finest of small businesses.

Over the past two years, the DeMarco's Fine Foods brand has received recognition throughout Windsor-Essex including nominations for Biz-X Magazines "Biz-X Awards" in 2018 for *Outstanding New Business*, and in 2019 for *Marvelous Millennial Manager*. The DeMarco's mantra has always been SUPPORT LOCAL, this is demonstrated by their dedication to featuring local small businesses including: *Colonial Coffee, I Luv Coffee Roasters, Forget the Flour, Christine's Bake Shop, Little Foot Foods, Zachi Fine Foods, Mare Nostrum, Cedar Valley Selections, Vegan Gardener Cheese, iRTH foods, Union Bakery, Borelli, Brenners Packers, Lo Mosta, Thyme To Go, Bubi's, Daryl Bars, The Chelsea Coal Fired Pizzas*, and many more. DeMarco's understands the importance of buying and selling local produce from hard working farmers right here in Essex County, supporting local and supporting small businesses is what keeps our community strong. Ray and Felicia make every effort possible to visit each of their produce suppliers to ensure only the freshest products are placed on their shelves, they would never sell you anything they wouldn't serve their own family.

From its humble origins with only a handful of shelves on its opening day, DeMarco's has expanded its retail space with shelving, display cases, and coolers filled with both local and international products at its 1600sqft location in the heart of South Windsor. Are you Keto, gluten free, or vegan? DeMarco's Fine

Foods boasts the *Largest Keto Selection* in Windsor-Essex along with a variety of gluten free and vegan options prepared here in Essex County.

When DeMarco's first opened neither Ray nor Felicia could have imagined the world would be facing the COVID-19 pandemic, but like every good entrepreneur knows adaptability is key to keep up with the ever changing business environment. To ensure that their customer's needs continued to be met, DeMarco's introduced curbside pickup, personal shopping, and even partnered up with another local entrepreneur *The Magical Mushroom Hub* to offer delivery to their loyal customers.

Two years, hundreds of satisfied customers, dozens of local businesses supported, and a dream come true, that's the DeMarco's story. What's the next chapter for DeMarco's Fine Foods? Could it be expansion of their current store, a second location, or live cooking demonstrations with local products? Stay tuned to all DeMarco's social media accounts and www.demarcosfinefoods.com to find our more! Stop in for fresh baked desserts, pre-prepared meals, the freshest stone fruit and citrus in all of Essex County, or to find those crisp ripe vegetables for your next cooking adventure.

