

The Chipper Restaurant In Grafton Becoming A Local Favorite

By Jen Holden August 17, 2022



Photo of the Bennett family by Jen Holden.

YORK-A fish and chips restaurant in York County is gaining in popularity after becoming a franchise last year.

Longtime restaurateur Patrick O’Carroll opened The Chipper four years ago in Grafton. Liam Bennett had been working as a kitchen manager for O’Carroll at another popular restaurant he owned at the time called The Patriot in Gloucester prior to making The Chipper his homebase.

Bennett, who’s from London, England, moved to Virginia in October 2017 after meeting the love of his life, Amy Bennett, through online gaming. After moving to the States, he met O’Carroll through his wife’s family.

“While Pat was working on opening The Chipper in 2018, I was working at Patriots Grill and would come and help him out at The Chipper after my shifts at Patriot’s Grill,” said Bennett.

O’Carroll decided to franchise The Chipper and Bennett became the restaurant’s first franchisee, purchasing the Grafton location in the beginning of 2021. Though another franchise site later opened on Princess Anne Road in Virginia Beach in November 2021, Bennett said the owner had issues with sta ng and decided to close the southside location.

“They did a great business and were always busy, but the decision was made solely due to sta ng issues,” said Bennett. “Months later, we are still getting calls from people asking us about the southside location.”

Bennett said O’Carroll is still in the market to obtain future franchisee owners for The Chipper. Meanwhile, Bennett and his wife are committed to providing a family-friendly atmosphere at the location in Grafton.

“I want families to feel comfortable and at ease in our restaurant,” he said. “We added a small fish tank at my son’s request and want to provide an atmosphere where kids can be kids while their families are enjoying a meal.”

The Chipper is known for its fried cod, haddock, battered sausage, and chips. In addition to signature dishes, the menu offers options such as crab cakes, hamburgers, fish tacos, and chicken tenders. Bennett said he recently conducted a customer survey and revamped the menu according to patronage input.

“Once we received our first 100 surveys, we went through them and found that, according to the responses, we were offering too much food,” said Bennett. “So, we decreased our prices and offered smaller portions. Unfortunately, if food prices continue to increase, we may have to raise our prices, but hopefully things will return to more of a normal in the near future.”

Bennett said supply-chain issues continue to affect The Chipper.

“Right now, there’s a potato shortage and it’s really hard to find them,” said Bennett. “When you do find them available for purchase, they’re triple the price, and obviously that affects us, but we have to adapt to it.”

Unlike many restaurants during the height of the covid-19 pandemic, The Chipper’s customer base grew because people flocked to the ease of its carryout menu.

“While we are certainly grateful customers have taken advantage of the carry-out option, I do recommend people come into our restaurant when they’re trying us for the first time, so that they can see what our food tastes like fresh from the grill,” said Bennett.

Bennett said imported beers, chocolates, and other specialty items that aren’t commonly found in the Hampton Roads area will be available for purchase at the restaurant later this month.

The Chipper is open from 11am to 8pm Monday through Sunday. For more information, visit its website or Facebook page.