

# New Twist to Fast Food

By Ted Whipp

Star Staff Reporter

(Transcribed from the Thursday, March 31, 2005 Windsor Star, page C4)

Starting his own business has proven the recipe for success for an executive chef.

Jeff White, of Windsor, opened Just Jeff's, an express gourmet takeout service, 3395 Howard Ave, two years ago. A risky move, it's paying off with sales 50 per cent ahead of last year's. Not only are sales increasing, he's discovered the market's wider than expected and he's expanding his product line with hot meals to go along with the menu of heat and serve items and entrees.

a niche food service, it's finding favour with a variety of customers, young and retirees, singles as well as couples. Starved for time, they also want variety and quality, he says.

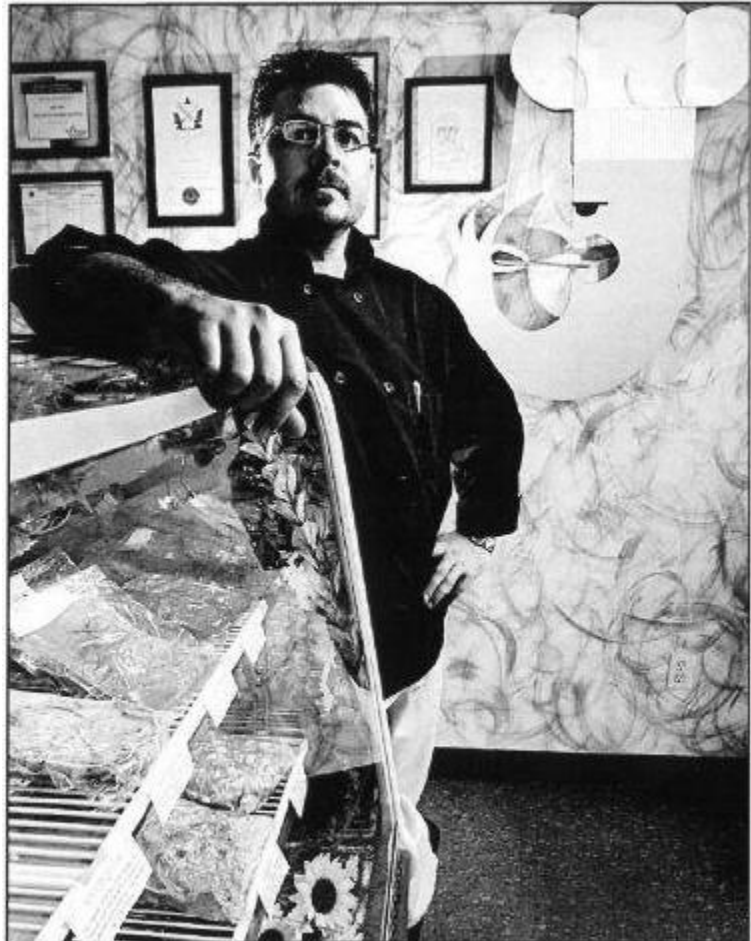
"They also like picking up their dinner in the morning or the day before," says White, 36.

And he's found a growing market in serving business and corporate functions for professional meetings and conferences.

The bonus for him goes beyond being an entrepreneur. He remains in food service, but without its exhausting long hours, especially at night, holidays and weekends.

"I don't work late nights, and I can stay in my industry and have a family."

"I like having control of my own destiny."



**OWNER:** Jeff White, owner of Just Jeff's, poses in his store Tuesday. White cooks gourmet food each day which can be boiled at home in eight minutes.

Star photo: Brent Foster

It's the best of both worlds for the Windsor-born and raised executive chef who's worked in some of the best kitchens around. White talks more about his background and his business, answering this week's questions for Business to Go.

### **1. What was your first job?**

"Babysitting. I was 13, and I learned responsibility."

### **2. What's your best success?**

"Still being in business. When you're rubbing nickels together just to get started, it's challenging." It seemed a daunting financial risk at the time, but he credits his wife Colleen for her encouragement and support. The couple have two young children.

White went to Kennedy secondary school and later the renowned Stratford Chefs School. He apprenticed at the Essex Golf Club, worked at other golf clubs as well as at Casino Windsor and the Windsor Hilton.

His experience as executive chef in a variety of food-service environments has helped him in his own business.

### **3. What would you do differently?**

"It's going so well that I really don't know what I would do differently. I just wish I had had more resources to start with."

### **4. How do you balance work and family?**

"Effort just makes the balance work," says White, who especially appreciates having more control over his work schedules.

### **What's your best and worst habit?**

"Sarcasm," he says of his worst habit, emphasizing that it's a light-hearted sarcasm.

"My best work habit is working with customers. I really enjoy talking to them, meeting with them, learning about their tastes and concerns.

"Because we get a lot of regulars here, you really get to know them."

---

*twhipp@thestar.canwest.com or 255-5777, Ext 663.*