

Vendor Spotlight: Stella's Antiguan Cuisine

By Laura Kirkpatrick

Stella Thomas grew up surrounded by delicious food. Her mother cooked for everyone in their community, and according to Stella, made the best bread around. With her mother serving as inspiration, Stella knew from an early age that she wanted to open her own café someday.



In 1989, Stella started on the path to make that dream a reality. She enrolled in a business course with Black Business Initiative (BBI) through Henson College in Halifax. There, she learned the ins and outs of running her own business and soon opened her own café. *Starlite Cuisine* on Cornwallis Street operated for over 11 successful years.

Unfortunately, it was at that time when Stella's mother became ill with terminal cancer. Stella decided to close her café, put her belongings in storage and care for her mother. The advice she received from her mother during that time helped shape the next stage of Stella's journey; she told her daughter she needed to get back in the business – and that's exactly what Stella did.

In 2010, Stella joined the International Market formerly held at the Halifax Seaport Farmers' Market on Fridays. This became the start of *Stella's Antiguan Cuisine* and she has since gone on to become a permanent Saturday vendor.

“After some time, a lot of my customers from the café started to come to the Market,” said Stella. “So right from the get-go, I had a good customer base.”



Stella's Antigua Cuisine features dishes like jerk chicken, donair samosas, oxtail, and curry goat. All the food is made fresh and features a mix of African Nova Scotian cooking and Antiguan cooking.

“I like the whole Seaport Market environment,” said Stella. “After everything with my family and my business, this felt like a safe place to be.”

Stella says the most rewarding part of her business is seeing the same customers come week after week to enjoy and appreciate her food.



This year’s African Heritage Month theme is “passing the torch”. When asked what advice she would give to young African Nova Scotians who want to start a business, Stella reinforced how important it is to take a course to learn about every aspect of running your own business – especially the finances. For her, the BBI course was a blessing.

“For any young black person going into business, follow your dreams,” said Stella. “Follow your heart, do what you love, and put 110 percent into it. It will always work out.”