



“I graduated in 2004 with an economics degree—and had no idea what I wanted to do.

So I started working at a place down the street called Micky Finn’s. They have a couple of beer, wine, and liquor shops in town, and I started managing two locations and doing the wine buying.

What really got me about wine was the history of it. Take a bottle with a French

label—you see the chateau, this castle and it says “Châteauneuf-du-Pape”. You do some digging and find out the Pope lived in France. Then you see “Hermitage” and find out that after the Crusades, they gave this badass soldier a little plot of land and called him “the hermit on the hill”. And now that area is producing some of the best Syrah you’ve ever tasted.

Uncovering that history—the story behind the wine—is what drew me into the wine world.

A lot of people in my industry come off as pretentious and look down on regular people who are interested in wine. But wine shouldn’t be like that. I’m not like that. You can enjoy wine and not be rude about it. My whole approach for the last 20 years is to figure out what kind of wine Florence likes and build on that—to have a fun, laid-back approach. I mean, we are a wine bar first.

Once you have the right wine with the right food, it’s a game-changer. So, we added a bigger food menu about a year ago. Here’s a tomato, here’s a Sauvignon Blanc. You’ve got acid and acid—boom! They mesh. Once you get those pairings right, the world opens up.

In a short three years, we’ve outgrown this place. Pizzas have caught on. We’d like more room, so we started just looking around for a new space. I talked to Hannah Davis, the Main Street Program Manager, and she said her office could help. Then I said, “I just don’t have the money to pick up and move.” It takes a lot of cash to run a business, and it takes even more money to move and run a bigger business.

So, she told me that Downtown Florence was in the early stages of piloting a crowdfunding platform in partnership with Main Street America to assist businesses like mine called NuMarket. Basically how it worked was, whatever contribution you made, you’d get 120% back in store credits. So if you give \$100 to support a business, you’ll get back \$120 to use at that business distributed back as credits over six months. It’s great because a business

can get the capital it needs upfront, and the supporter can get more money to spend at that local business.

So that's what we're trying to do. If our campaign is successful, we can hopefully move across the street. If we don't meet our goal through the pilot campaign, the money contributed will be used to make this place better, optimized for what we do, and the supporters still get their credits, so there isn't a risk of losing that investment.

I grew up in Columbia. Big city. But the thing I love about Florence is that people will support you. People will come out. No matter how big the city gets, we're still a small-town vibe. I like that. My daughter makes fun of me all the time. She's like, "We can't walk anywhere where you don't know somebody."

But that's what I love about it. In the big cities, you get lost. You feel like nobody. But here, you feel known. You feel like you're helping and part of something bigger.

The cool thing I like about downtown—there is a lot of food and beverage places, but we're not fighting with each other. We're all trying to support each other in our own way.

We're not fighting each other, but for each other.

That's Florence."

–Bryan Holt, [Cru Wine & Tap](#)