

## **A Local Success Story**

Interview with Mary Whitney and John Baker of [SHaBean Coffee Roastery](http://www.shabeancoffee.roastery.ca/)

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### **Tell me a little bit about your business.**

We roast single-source, high-end coffees from 4 continents, and mostly wholesale them to food retailers. For [summer 2018](#), the strains we are currently roasting are Kenya AA, Guatemala Antigua, Costa Rica Tarrazu, Peru Organic Fair Trade, Papua New Guinea AA, Sumatra Mandheling, Espresso Smooth and Espresso Bold. More information can be found on our website [SHaBeanCoffeeRoastery.ca](http://www.SHaBeanCoffeeRoastery.ca). A 360g package of coffee costs \$13.00. We sell 5 and 10lb bags with a special order. Our advice: treat roasted coffee beans like produce. Buy it in smaller quantities and enjoy it at its peak of freshness. We put the roast date on the front of all our coffee packages.

### **When did you know that it was time to expand?**

We wanted a roaster that could do more; produce faster and even better-quality roasts.

As John has been roasting coffee as a hobby for many years, he understands a lot about coffee. He continues to research reading books and online material and we have visited a few roasteries to gain a better perspective of the process.

### **Who were your key partners? What resources did you use?**

When we made the commitment to start a business we initially approached [KEDCO](#) in Kingston due to their positive reputation, and they gave us some information about setting up a sole proprietorship. We also engaged our inner circle and spoke to a family member who is a municipal planner in another community. With her encouragement we consulted our local [Township Planning and Development Department](#).

From here we went out on the street and sought advice from another local business, Derek and Cindy at [Ridgway Confections](#) in Seeley's Bay, and their experience in running a small business.

We learnt very quickly from a local website designer, Dave Munro of [D.M. Services](#), that our digital skills needed improvement to set up a website and his services were also recruited. This prompted some short introductory courses in Word and Excel from [St. Lawrence College](#) in Brockville.

All our activities were self-funded.



## **Describe your biggest challenge so far?**

Finding and connecting to our market has been a hurdle.

Our coffee is mostly sold wholesale to retailers and we are constantly on the lookout for new outlets, we are happy to sell to restaurants and offices in the region.

From the start, our goal has been to get the business started and have a young enthusiastic partner join in and take it over. We hope to help monitor and guide a new entrepreneur and allow this business to soar way beyond what we initially imagined!

## **Where is your product available?**

Our approach is fresh and local! We sell mostly to regional retailers, such as [Elgin Freshmart](#), [Green Gecko](#) (Lyndhurst), Lansdowne Freshmart, [Lavallee's Inverary Store](#), [Nest Egg](#) (Seeley's Bay), Sweet's Freshmart (Seeley's Bay), and [Wendy's Country Market](#) (Lyndhurst).

Frontenac County Offices and Frontenac Paramedics are examples of other businesses that wholesale purchase our product.

## **If you had a magic wand and could do anything differently, what would it be?**

Well, realistically, we are not sure we would have done much anything differently!

One thing we could have done BETTER is to have sought legal advice before naming the company. We registered online with the Provincial government, and were pleased that no one else had registered our original choice for a name. Shortly after we received a letter from an intellectual property lawyer on behalf of another small roasting company ordering us to stop using the name as it was similar to theirs. We then sought out a Solicitor in Kingston, [Ian Gavaghan](#) who has expertise in this area. He advised us that the provincial registration is helpful if you are knowledgeable on the process, his recommendation was to think outside of the box and make up a name that would be unique to us. That is how "SHaBean Coffee Roastery" was born! The registration process is lengthy, but worth it.

## **What advice would you give a business owner who isn't sure if they should grow?**

Assuming you want to be bigger... Compare the costs of growing with the potential growth in sales. In our opinion, these are some of the key areas to research:

1. Is there a market for more product?
2. Do you have the capital expenditure to handle the expansion? And if not, can you obtain it?
3. Will the profit of increased sales recover the costs associated with an expansion, or even a potential borrowing situation?
4. Will this require more labour and will the profits cover additional staff?