



PRESS RELEASE—FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From Local Gem to National Fame: Smokin' 116 Bistro Brings Belleville to Crave TV

Belleville, Ont., May 28, 2025 —Downtown Belleville just got a major boost of national attention when local gem **The Smokin' 116 Bistro** was featured on Crave TV's popular new series, "Drag Brunch Saved My Life".

The production crew, including host and Canadian drag superstar Priyanka, spent nearly two weeks filming at the bistro in the fall of 2024. "Every day for about two weeks they filmed for hours," owner Sal Ladhani said. "We had breakfast and lunch together. It felt like family."

The show sees Priyanka—winner of Canada's Drag Race and former TV host— "sashay through diners, steakhouses, and bistros to help restaurants plan and throw the ultimate drag brunch".

The show didn't just highlight the venue's famous drag brunches and smoked BBQ—it showcased the charm and soul of Belleville itself. From waterfront shots to the iconic water tower and street scenes downtown, Belleville was proudly woven throughout the series.

"They wanted to make it about the community," said Ladhani.

The bistro saw an immediate impact when the fifth episode of the series aired on May 16, 2025. Their Instagram followers skyrocketed from just 167 pre-show to over 7,700, and they've received messages from as far as Vancouver, Kitchener, and Niagara Falls.

"We got a lot of congratulatory emails, messages from all over," Ladhani said. "Now people are using this facility (more). We have corporate events, parties—people are coming."

More than just good TV, "Drag Brunch Saved My Life" brought deep emotional resonance to the Smokin' 116 team and its guests.

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“One of the ladies said she had issues with her family because she is gay. She said, ‘When I came here, (Smokin’ 116 Bistro) gave me a sense of family.’ I never knew that it would impact someone so much,” Ladhani said.

At the heart of the bistro’s charm is its passion for inclusion, creativity, and great food. Known for its low-and-slow smoked meats, the team showed off everything from ribs to chicken during filming. “People come in and say, ‘What’s in the smoke?’ It smells so good.”

As Downtown Belleville continues to evolve, the success of Smokin’ 116 is more than a win for a single restaurant—it’s a win for the whole city. “Hopefully that will put us on the map, put Belleville on the map,” Ladhani said.

For more information, visit The Smokin’ 116 Bistro on Facebook.

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