



PRESS RELEASE

‘Everybody’s baba’: The Kafana celebrates ribbon-cutting in Downtown Belleville

Belleville, Ont., Oct. 1, 2025—The Kafana Restaurant celebrated its long-awaited grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony on Wednesday, Oct. 1, 2025 at 199 Front St. in Downtown Belleville.

Mayor Neil Ellis with Councillors Garnet Thompson and Margaret Seu, MPP Tyler Allsopp, Jill Raycroft from the Belleville Chamber of Commerce, Victoria Watts from Economic Development, Eileen Brown from Trenval and Danielle Hanoman, Executive Director of the DBIA were present at the ribbon-cutting.

Founded by partners Corinne Sykes and Myroslava Symonenko, The Kafana is the realization of a dream that’s been 15 years in the making.

“The original inspiration was based on a European style, late-night cafe kind of vibe, a gathering place with live music and dancing,” said Sykes.

Since their soft opening in October 2024, Sykes said she’s been “overwhelmingly impressed” by the reception in Belleville.

“People are so excited and ecstatic to have an eclectic option, a place that’s open late and open on weekends. (But) I was not expecting to make people cry, in a good way—they remember their *babas* (grandmothers) making these dishes,” said Sykes.

“That was the whole point of opening [The Kafana](#): to create a place where everybody of all ages, all backgrounds, could feel at home.”

“We’re thrilled to welcome The Kafana to Downtown Belleville,” said Hanoman.

The **DOWNTOWN** **18 DISTRICT 16**

“Their passion for creating a space where people can gather, celebrate culture, and feel at home truly embodies what our downtown is all about. Businesses like this bring vibrancy, diversity, and energy to the district, and we couldn’t be more excited to see them thrive here.”

The choice to open downtown was intentional. “Kafanas are traditionally located in the central square of a town,” Sykes said. “When this corner plaza space became available, it felt like the perfect fit. There were many signs that we’re supposed to be here (in this location).”

Sykes trained as a mixologist, worked in food service and experiential food tour experiences in California. Symonenko brought her own expertise in marketing and Ayurvedic cooking, as well as her Ukrainian heritage and culinary traditions.

The restaurant’s menu reflects this blend of backgrounds: hearty pierogies, Balkan-inspired dishes, and contemporary twists on traditional European recipes—all made with fresh, local ingredients.

The celebrations continue with a one-year anniversary party on Saturday, October 4, featuring a Balkan brass band, dancing, and food specials, followed by live Ukrainian folk music during Sunday brunch on October 5.

For more information, visit DowntownBelleville.ca

-30-

Media Contact:

Yona Harvey

Public Relations and Membership Coordinator

membership@downtownbelleville.ca

613-968-2242



About Belleville Downtown District BIA

The Belleville Downtown District BIA is focused on evolving the collective ambition of our business community, BIA members, and staff to embrace change and build a stronger, more vibrant downtown.