

Fuel for the body: Organic eatery opens in former OKC gas station

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Patrick Petralie with Greenhorn on the corner of NW Fourth Street and Western Avenue Monday. (Maike Sabolich)

OKLAHOMA CITY – Patrick Petralie had been turning over dreams of opening his own organic eatery in his mind for a while when he spotted a tiny, vacant gas station on the edge of downtown and stuck a note to the door to ask if it was for rent.

A carpenter with an art degree, Petralie has been serving up homemade fare such as quiche, chili and gourmet coffee out of the tiny gas station at NW Fourth Street and Western Avenue for the past month now. Called Greenhorn, the eatery serves to-go and drive-thru breakfast and lunch orders from a small window at the front from 6:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

“I have old men come by and tell me they remember when this was a gas station,”

Petralie said. “I’ve got a lot of constructive criticism from people, too.”

The main nugget of wisdom he gets from his customers is that he needs more signage. Petralie hopes to have a sign affixed to a pole at the corner of NW Fourth and Western soon. For now, a homemade sign welded to the top of the old, nonfunctioning gas pumps is the most visible indicator that the place is open for business.

The 235-square-foot gas station was built in 1958, according to the county assessor’s website. Petralie did all of the work to put a commercial kitchen into the space, including the plumbing. He’s financed the business out of his own pocket, without the help of a small business loan or investors. Just about everything in the kitchen has been recycled from found materials, from the repurposed countertops to the bicycle wheel where Petralie keeps his handwritten recipes. Petralie has no formal culinary training, but worked his way through college in cafes.

“He’s very modest, but his food is amazing,” said Petralie’s friend Brian Ezelle, who has been helping get the business off the ground with free labor.

Business has been kind of slow, but Petralie is optimistic that things will pick up once he gets more signage and word spreads.

Petralie’s fiancée, Stephanie McPherson, also helps by grinding grain from wheat berries that she buys in bulk. Greenhorn also sells grain and lip balm that McPherson makes from scratch using local beeswax.

The couple share a love of making things from scratch, she said.

“I think Oklahoma City has really needed something in the local health food, organic food area – something we can eat fast that’s not bad for us,” she said.

Most of the ingredients Petralie uses are from local farms. The eggs for his daily quiches and frittatas come from a farm near Norman and the cheese comes from Kingfisher.

“You can be supporting four different local businesses in one quiche,” he said.