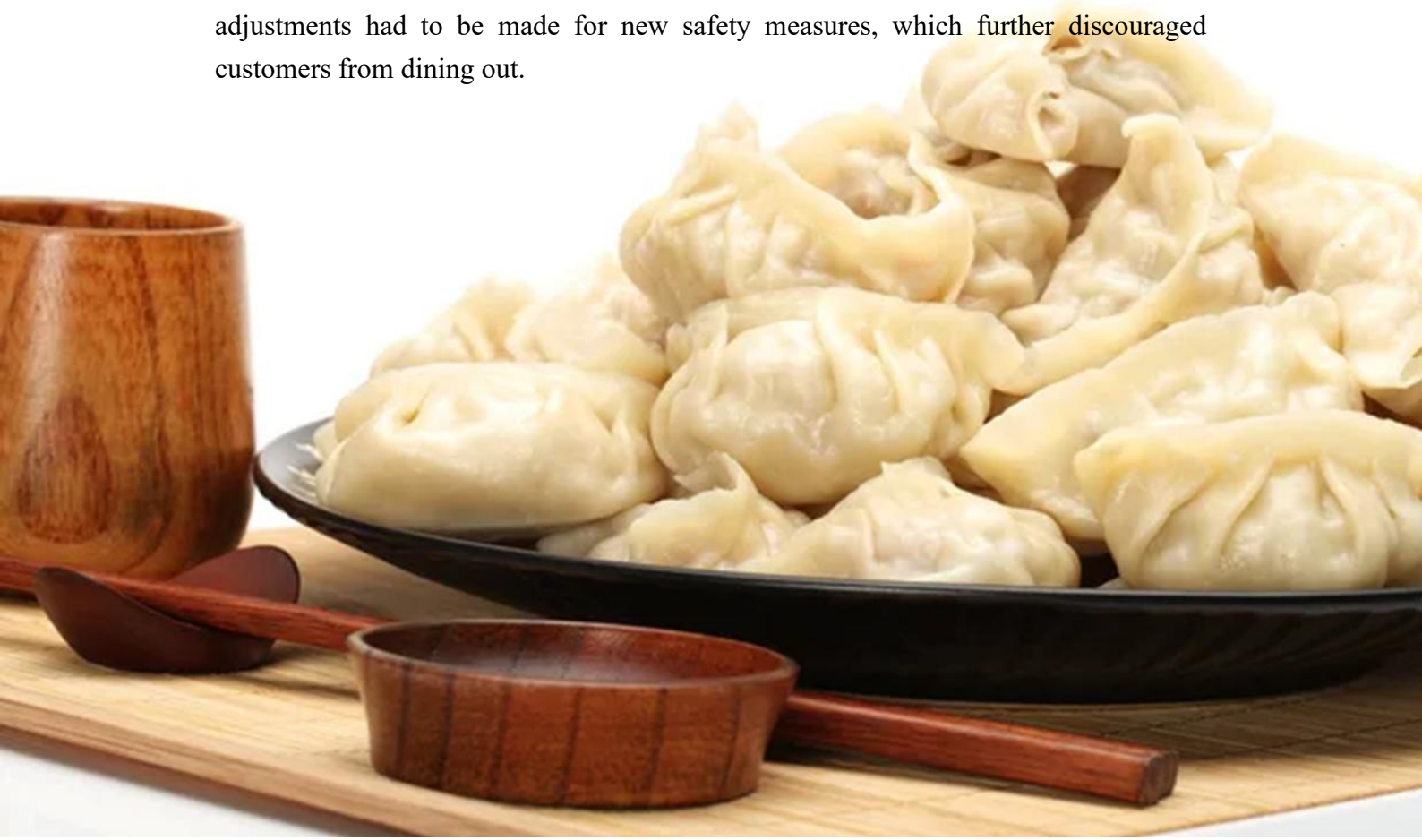


## Surviving the Pandemic (Restaurant Edition)

From chain restaurants to small businesses, not everyone could withstand the odds against the harsh effects of the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, many businesses—large or small—faded into the past and disappeared without a trace. In this article, we are pleased to have Mr. Chris Wong, owner of Little Dumplings, share his experience running his restaurant during the pandemic.

Little Dumplings is a family-run restaurant that has been passed down through generations since the 1900s. Renowned for its unique homemade dumplings, Little Dumplings has a cult-like following of customers who swear by its dumplings and visit the restaurant regularly. However, such a long-standing business faced numerous obstacles and fought to stay afloat during the pandemic.

“We were devastated,” says Mr. Wong. “The costs, the rent, and all the prices were soaring. Other shops in our neighborhood were closing down one by one, and we didn’t know if we’d be next!” Mr. Wong explained that production costs skyrocketed, increasing tenfold or even more compared to prices before the pandemic. On the other hand, the number of customers dropped drastically due to newly enforced social distancing policies and public fear. “Everyone was scared of being infected, and eating in restaurants was deemed dangerous.” When asked how the pandemic affected their relationship with customers, Mr. Wong responded that he felt more distant, as customers had to wear masks when they were not eating and refrained from speaking out of fear of contracting the virus. This was in contrast to how he would chat with customers before the pandemic, creating a joyous and relaxing atmosphere. Many adjustments had to be made for new safety measures, which further discouraged customers from dining out.



“As the pandemic hit its lowest, so did we.” Mr. Wong, being the breadwinner for his family of three, faced insurmountable pressure to maintain the only source of household income. “My family depended on me, and it was not easy.” With the increasing losses experienced by the restaurant, Mr. Wong even had to take on debt as a last resort. He was aware that if he didn’t make any changes, they could lose the restaurant and end up going bankrupt. Although Mr. Wong faced a crisis, he held his spirits high and actively sought a solution. Eventually, he came up with an idea that would save Little Dumplings and secure its place during the pandemic. “We decided to provide take-out services that directly delivered our customers’ dumplings to their doorsteps. Who knew it would become our lifeboat?” Customers immediately responded positively, and the restaurant’s sales surged again. Not only did they manage to cover both their restaurant and household expenses, but they also paid off the debt they had incurred when they were at their lowest. Witnessing their success, many other restaurants decided to follow suit in hopes of achieving the same results.

As the pandemic takes a positive turn, many businesses are reopening, and costs are gradually lowering. “We are forever grateful for the chance we were given and for our loyal customers. Only after the crisis we faced during the pandemic do I realize the importance of adopting new strategies when faced with hurdles and how we can always strive to provide better services to our customers.” Mr. Wong promised to continue striving for excellence and to provide the best for his customers.

Mr. Wong’s experience is a great inspiration for fellow restaurant owners. In the face of an ever-changing environment, we do not know when the next “pandemic” will hit. For business owners, it is crucial to withstand high internal and external pressure and be ready to adapt to any changes in response to the environment. Little Dumplings now enjoys booming business, and we are thankful to Mr. Wong for sharing his experience.

