

Newcomers use their skills to start a new business on PEI

by Heidi Riley

Self Employment

In April 2009, Adnan and Pinar Paputcu and their two sons moved to PEI from Istanbul, Turkey, a city of 15 million people living in an area smaller than PEI. Now they are the owners of a new European-style pastry shop in Charlottetown called **Gusto Patisserie**.

Pinar has a degree in Psychology, a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) and was a public relations specialist who owned a PR company. Adnan is an Electrical Engineer who worked as a general manager for large companies.

Adnan was often away on extended business trips, and both worked long hours. "We had professional lives and good incomes, but we wanted something different," says Adnan. "We were tired all the time, and we needed to slow down and enjoy our family more. We wanted to explore different cultures, people, and languages. We wanted to prepare a better future for our children, and wanted our boys to learn foreign languages, to speak English without an accent, and to have a world-wide vision."

Pinar started to look for a country to raise her family, and chose Canada. "Canada is a nation of immigrants," she says. "I thought Canadians would be more interested in adapting to us, and helping us adapt to them. I liked the system of education and health care, and especially the concern and help given to newcomers."

Choosing PEI

The couple planned to come to PEI and then move to Vancouver, but when they visited the Island, they changed their minds. "We loved Charlottetown so much," says Adnan. "We realized that it was smaller and more comfortable, and we could keep track of our kids better here than in Vancouver."

When they visited PEI last February, they experienced three storms in ten days. "We were impressed that life here goes on even with bad weather. In Istanbul, three centimetres of snow closes down the city."

Purchasing a home was a challenge. "With banks cutting lending after the credit crunch, we had a hard time getting a mortgage. We were newcomers with no credit history in Canada. But we finally convinced the bank manager, and I must thank him for that."

Making business plans

After settling into their new home in Stratford, the couple began to plan their future employment. Pinar decided to fulfill a life-long dream of running a catering business.



Pinar and Adnan Paputcu have opened **Gusto Patisserie**, which is the first Patisserie on PEI. It is located on Pownal Street, Charlottetown. Pinar makes all the European-style pastries, sweets, desserts, cakes and gourmet bites on-site.

The couple noticed that there were few options in Charlottetown for the type of food they missed from back home. With no experience in commercial cooking or baking and a handful of recipes found on the Internet, Pinar knew what she wanted to achieve. "I knew what I liked as a customer. Fresh quality ingredients, a kitchen that is more than clean, and a comfortable and relaxing place to sit."

They looked for a space to rent and renovated it from top to bottom in two months. Adnan did all the plumbing, electrical, carpentry and painting work with help from Pinar.

A change in lifestyles

This experience has been a total change for both of them. "I used to manage a big company with many staff, and now I purchase food, serve customers, wash the floor and clean the bathrooms," laughs Adnan. And Pinar still works long hours. She arrives at work by 7 am and leaves after 6 pm. "But now I am working for myself, and I choose what to make every day," she says.

Appreciating their new home

"We have realized that people on PEI are very warm," says Adnan. "To be honest, we did not expect that. But we have found that people here love to talk, and they are very welcoming. We are happy here. Word of mouth is working, and we are getting more customers all the time."

Help getting settled in a new land

"There are so many people who helped us," says Adnan. They especially want to thank:

- their **bank manager** for having faith in them
- the **PEI Association for Newcomers to Canada**, which helped arrange language training, settling the children in school, making applications, and many other supports
- **Bonita Chlow** with **Innovation PEI** helped with business arrangements and finding a space to lease. "She really loves her job, and loves to help people. She is like a member of our family now."

How do we keep newcomers on PEI?

Adnan says newcomers leave PEI not because of the weather or the small size of the province or because they are looking for a community of their peers. "They leave because they can't find business or job opportunities here.

"We don't look for favours, but we believe that the government could make better use of the business and professional backgrounds of newcomers. Many newcomers are well educated and are good workers. The potential is there to add value to the PEI economy by using the expertise newcomers bring with them."

Hiring plans

"We focus on local people as our customers, but we know it will get more busy in the tourist season," says Pinar. "Between June and October, we will need someone to help with serving food and in the kitchen."