

Shelton's Mama Pierogi now in Bridgeport

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Olga Yevich, of Shelton, delivers pierogies to Food World IGA in Bridgeport. She makes them and delivers them by hand. Yevich calls the new business Mama's Pierogies.



Olga Yevich, of Shelton, delivers these pierogies to Food World IGA in Bridgeport.

BRIDGEPORT -- Olga Yevich never set out to become Mama Pierogi. In fact, she set out to deliver expectant mothers and injured people to the hospital. On Friday, the Shelton resident found herself delivering 2 dozen of her Mama's Pierogies, her version of the Eastern European dumpling, to Food World IGA in Bridgeport.

It was a trip three years in the making, as it marked the first time since founding her company in 2006 that she was selling to a store outside of Shelton.

That she's even in this business is a bit of a surprise to her.

"I always thought I would work in the medical field," she said, after making the delivery. Yevich, 50, earned a medical lab technician's degree from Housatonic Community College, but she said she never actually worked in a lab because she found out how great it was to be an emergency medical technician. She did that for almost six years beginning around 2000.

"Sometimes, I still miss it. When I hear the sirens," she said, waving her hands to indicate she wants to run out to help, but Yevich was in an auto accident in 2001 and suffered a neck injury, which continued to nag her as she worked for Echo Hose Ambulance. She was already thinking about quitting, when on March 7, 2005, she and EMT Dave Supernaw delivered a baby.

Delivering that little girl was one of the best days she's ever had at a job, Yevich said. She figured the baby delivery was a chance to go out on a high note, instead of being dragged out of the ambulance by the pain in her neck.

Without a job, Yevich started making pierogies at home and was giving them to friends, when Jenette Kreidler, a co-owner of Oronoque Farms, told her to stop.

"She told me, why pass it out for nothing?" Yevich said.

Yevich had never considered going into business for herself, but she jumped in, got her licenses and got to work. She still works out of the bakery at Oronoque Farms and today she sells her pierogies at Food World, Oronoque and Beechwood Supermarket in Shelton in packages of 12. She's also gone back to school and is taking classes on small business management at Housatonic.

Mama's Pierogies is actually a three-woman operation and the official name of the business is Three Mamas Pierogies. Yevich works with her daughter, Andriana Marsh, and Yevich's own mother, the keeper of many of the recipes, Alexandra Korol.

To be honest, Yevich's pierogies are patterned after the Ukrainian varényky, also a dumpling like pierogies. Yevich said her grandparents immigrated to America in the 1950s from a small village on the Black Sea. While Mama's features classic Ukrainian recipes, it also boasts some new twists including chocolate and peanut butter. She has eight varieties, including the two types she delivered to Food World -- potato and American cheese and potato and scallions.

Jim Bennitt, general manager of Food World, said he is glad to give Yevich a shot in his store.

"She buys a lot of raw ingredients from me," Bennitt said. "And I'll give it a chance."

The grocery store carries fresh vegetable, fruit and fish, and Bennitt said it operates on a low profit margin, so it's affordable for people like Yevich to buy their ingredients here.

Bennitt said he's put other Connecticut-produced food products on his shelves before with mixed results.

He had a spaghetti sauce maker go national, and he's had a few who went out of business. "As long as they're licensed, I'm willing to give it a try."

Food World is putting Mama's Pierogies in its freezer on Aisle 5, where they will retail for \$5.99.

Normally, Bennitt and Yevich would introduce the new product by giving out samples, but Food World is undergoing a major renovation, which isn't expected to be finished until the spring. Bennitt hopes to have a grand opening and offer tastings then.

That's not to say that Yevich didn't get a big welcome when she touted her delivery into Food World.

Three workers building the stone facade near the Food World entrance stopped and stared as Yevich walked into the grocery store carrying the red cooler while being photographed.

When they heard she was delivering pierogies, one of the workers looked up and said loudly with a Eastern European accent, "Pierogies! Good."

Finding Mama's Pierogies At Food World IGA 345 Huntington Turnpike, Bridgeport At Oronoque Farms 188 Leavenworth Road, Shelton At Beechwood Supermarket 40 Huntington St., Shelton On line at www.mamaspierogis.com.