

The Juice Cellar takes root in downtown Bangor

By Alan Bennett

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It was no surprise Chris Roberts would open up his own establishment. The new owner of [The Juice Cellar](#), which sells organic and vegan juices, smoothies and salads at its new Bangor location, has a family history with food.

“My family’s been involved with food since the early 1900s. Even here in downtown Bangor, my great-grandfather had a produce stand in 1912 that he opened,” Roberts said.

For those who haven’t been to The Juice Cellar, it’s a welcome addition to the city of Bangor. The restaurant, which opened in January, rounds out the business landscape of brewpubs and ethnic establishments that dot the streets of downtown.

However, Roberts’ rich family history was disrupted when he lost his mother nine years ago to brain cancer. Between his mother’s passing and his own battle with cyclothymia, which, [according to the Mayo Clinic](#), is a mood disorder with symptoms similar to, but less severe than, bipolar disorder, Roberts knew he had to make a lifestyle change. Quickly, he began evaluating his own dietary choices.

“I really started to take a much harder look at the food that we eat and what kinds of things can cause cancer, what kinds of things we can do for ourselves to help prevent the blossoming of those cancer cells in our bodies,” Roberts said. “I came across raw food, vegan food, and I really started to take a look at my own life, and how I eat and how I felt.”

After making the switch, Roberts soon found himself 70 pounds lighter with a much better mindset and outlook on life.

“Life was really great, and so I decided I wanted to share that with my community,” Roberts said.

Roberts opened the first Juice Cellar in Belfast in 2013, and soon began exploring a Bangor location the following summer. After more than a year of negotiations and careful planning, the Bangor location opened in January, and so far, business has been booming, with more than 100 customers daily, despite this winter’s horrible conditions, Roberts said.

The Bangor location’s winter business has been “not even comparable” to the Belfast location, Roberts said, continually drawing in more than 100 customers daily.

For students in the area, the Juice Cellar's opening is a significant change to downtown Bangor. "I think it's a significant benefit," Alex Wirth, a mechanical engineering student at the University of Maine, said. Wirth is also a former employee at Maine Squeeze Smoothie & Juice Café in her hometown of Portland, Maine.

"Our generation is becoming more health-conscious, and the convenience of the location makes healthier choices a lot easier when you spend the day walking around and shopping in Bangor," Wirth said.

"It's good food. It's healthy. You feel good after you eat it," Michelle Duff, a UMaine senior who studies child development, said as she purchased lunch on an outing with a friend.

"I think that what we're offering is something that you'd find in your bigger cities like Boston, Washington D.C., New York, all of those. There's nothing quite like this really outside of Portland that I know of," Roberts said. "I think it'll be really cool for students and young professionals."

And he's more than happy to welcome some friendly competition. With the opening of [Tiller & Rye](#), an organic and natural food store that also serves juices and smoothies, in Brewer on Tuesday, April 7, Roberts isn't threatened by the similar business. He's just happy to see the area grow.

"I'm not going to get 'Stephen King rich' off this business," Roberts said. "I would much rather have a bunch of other businesses like this that are feeding people really healthy food, really vibrant food."

With high ceilings and murals adorning the walls, natural lighting and the sweet, floral smells of fruits and vegetables being juiced into colorful concoctions, The Juice Cellar certainly embodies vibrancy in both personality and product.

"I would love a juice shop right in downtown Orono that offers an extensive and locally-sourced menu, but baby steps are always better than nothing," Wirth said.

As of right now, Roberts has no plans to open shop in Orono, but says he is looking to expand his business eventually.

"Never say never," he said, referring to a move to Orono. "But as of right now, it's not something that's in my plan."

“I’m just excited to be here,” Roberts said. “I just can’t say enough how excited and how happy I am to be able to be a part of this community again, and I’m really looking forward to all the stuff that’s to come.”