

## IDEAS

# A recipe FOR SUCCESS

BY PATRICK MORLEY

SOMETIMES, IT TAKES a crowd to raise a cookbook.

Such is the case in London as a dedicated posse of local chefs, producers and bakers are sharing London's eclectic and thriving culinary scene in the form of a book – The Forest City Cookbook (forestcitycookbook.com).

The book is the brainchild of Venezuelan-born Alieska Robles, whose goal is to inspire Londoners to engage with their local culinary scene and to embrace new recipes from award-winning chefs.

The crowd, in this case, is everyday Londoners – or, as Robles calls them, “partners” – who are funding the project by sponsoring one cookbook at a time. Along with over 40 chefs, 30 local producers, four craft breweries and 125 original recipes, the project's goal is to gather Londoners around a symbolic community table celebrating the joy of food.

“The wonderful part of crowdfunding is that people feel part of something meaningful, something they can be proud of,” says Robles. “This model is perfect for entrepreneurs who are doing something meaningful and special that can include the community.”

Crowdfunding raises many small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet. Most often, crowdfunding is used to support creative projects, medical expenses, travel, or community-oriented social entrepreneurship projects.

The heart of the concept is to disrupt more traditional investment models such as banks or wealthy individuals and to create the sense of collective involvement in the venture. In many ways, crowdfunding is an example of the best the internet can be – allowing grassroots projects or charity initiatives to reach large numbers of potential partners while bypassing stifling institutional bureaucracies. In 2015, US\$34 billion was raised for projects that used a form of crowdfunding.

However, the concept of crowdfunding is not new – it has been used for centuries to raise money for publishing projects and to fund wars in the form of “war bonds.” In 1885, a newspaper-led crowdfunding campaign helped to build the monumental base for the Statue of Liberty.

Robles has created six different funding options. Partners can simply make a no-strings-attached donation of \$25. A thousand dollar contribution gets you a signed copy of the book by participating chefs, along with dinner for six, prepared by one of the book's contributors.

“The most important aspect of crowdfunding is to be transparent and honest about your project,” says Robles. “People notice when a project is coming from the heart. The Younger generation wants to be part of authentic projects. Life is about making personal connections.”

In many ways, The Forest City Cookbook and its crowdfunded content is a symbol of community engagement and passion. The book belongs to the community and is of the community. These unique attributes are what inspired \*\*\* to take leave from her regular career as a photographer to focus exclusively on the project.

“One of the bigger challenges was educating our partners on the benefits of the crowdfunding model – to let them know that the book is not ready quite yet, but your investment is going to make it happen. We still get emails asking when it will be ready,” says Robles.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Back (left to right) Brian Blatnicki, Marketing & Communications; Chad Stewart, Farmers Public Relations

Front (left to right) Amanda Devries, Prop Styling; Alieska Robles, Creator, Art & Design, Photography; Carl Matthes, Tech Support.

The first hard-copy books will be ready sometime in the spring after final proofing is approved and e-books will be ready near the end of December or early January. The original goal of the project was to secure funding for 1,000 books, but Robles says they've already surpassed 1,200 and are looking to fund more in the next two months before the project ends.

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