

# SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER SUCCESS STORY

## SIMI THAI CUISINE

2355 Tapo Street #15  
Simi Valley, CA 93063  
(805) 522-4226

### BEFORE:

Born in Bangkok, Thai couple Tony Pornrattavisai and his wife Amy met while students at Tennessee State University. After earning their degrees, they began working in restaurants in the Hollywood area. Although schooled in business, Amy's love for cooking prompted her to get a degree in culinary arts from Los Angeles Technical College, and together the two followed their dream to own and operate a Thai restaurant in the United States. They found an ideal location in Simi Valley and opened Simi Thai Cuisine in 2012.

Today, Simi Thai Cuisine is a dream come true, but it didn't happen without challenges they overcame with the help of SBDC. In 2013, the Pornrattavisais approached SBDC for help with their social media and SBDC Business Advisor, Kay Wallace, counseled them. Their business grew steadily and was doing well until California's passage of the increased minimum wage in 2015 sent them back to SBDC for help figuring out how to afford the increase in wages.

### BEST ADVICE:

Working closely with SBDC Marketing and Restaurant Consultant Rose Obetz, they were able to implement a variety of marketing strategies including a menu re-design that highlighted the restaurant's menu and competitive edge—all fresh ingredients, authentic curry powders from Thailand, real lump crab meat, jumbo shrimp, and tri-tip in many of their dishes. The results were positive, with revenues increasing by \$43,000 within six months. The Pornrattavisais were able to pay the higher wages as well as bring on 2.5 more employees.

### AFTER:

In addition to helping Tony and Amy improve their marketing, Obetz advised them to expand the restaurant's capacity to include a Thai Express lunch buffet, as well as a liquor service. With help from SBDC expert Bill Bartels, they restructured the business from sole proprietorship to LLC, and with the increased revenues produced through the menu re-design, the Pornrattavisais will be able to manage their restaurant expansion without additional loans.



### LESSONS LEARNED:

- **Marketing Matters:**  
“Working with SBDC Business Advisor, Kay Wallace, to create a strong online presence, helped us increase our visibility beyond our immediate community and develop a base of loyal customers,” said Pornrattavisai.
- **Branding Your Business:**  
“SBDC helped us target our unique strengths and market them strategically,” said Pornrattavisai. “Our customers know us for our quality and authenticity. They value our authentic curry powders from Thailand, our fresh ingredients and genuine Thai dishes.”
- **Work With Experts:**  
“The expertise provided by Rose and the other SBDC advisors helped us reach our target audiences and cater to their culinary interests,” said Tony. “Their guidance on expanding our space, and adding our lunch buffet and liquor service, proved invaluable to growing our business beyond our expectations.”



1601 Carmen Drive, Suite 215  
Camarillo, CA 93010  
805-384-1800 • info@edc-vc.com  
www.edc-vc.com

