TRENDING

Baltimore Chef Drives 6 Hours to Cook a Meal for a Customer Diagnosed with Cancer

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The co-founder of Ekiben, one of the most popular fusion restaurants in Baltimore, Steve Chu, drove to Vermont for the weekend to cook a meal for a special person.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(122); });

This is a story of food, love, and dying. And, a story for a stunning customer service; it all began with two Canton residents, Rina and Brandon Jones, who needed some carryout.

But, not any carryout-they looked for the tempura broccoli from this restaurant, a loved local fusion place which began in Fells Point.

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This dish was intended for the mom of Rina who resides in Vermont and was diagnosed with final stage lung cancer.

She Has Loved This Dish since She First Visited Her Daughter

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The mom of Rina fell in love with this dish since she first tried it when she visited Rina in Baltimore, 6 years ago.

Despite being a person who had travelled a lot and tried different cuisines, the Ekiben crispy tempura broccoli became her obsession. She always stopped there on her way to Charm City.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(132); });
Rina said that in one moment, her mom jokingly said that this is a meal she wants on her deathbed.

But, the deathbed was closer than anyone imagined it would be. Unfortunately, in 2020 December, she was diagnosed with cancer and opted out of treatment because it made her feel terrible.

And, she wanted to live her last days in her home. Her community in Vermont showed amazing support and love. They brought meals and there's constantly an overflow of cards in the kitchen from people wishing her well.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(133); });
For her daughter Rina, this is an appropriate, loving end for the woman who spent years giving her time and heart to her community.

And, last week, when Rina and Brendon were getting ready for the 6-hour- trip to Rina's mom, possibly for the last time, they realized that the tempura broccoli would probably get soggy on the drive.

Brandon Decides to Reach Out to Ekiben Owners

This is when Brandon, a 37-year-old engineer, decided to mail the owners and co-founders of Ekiben, Steve Chu and Ephrem Abebe in hope of getting some tips about the meal.

ezstandalone.cmd.push(function () { ezstandalone.showAds(134); });
And, he added a note on the side that he's not a great cook. When they read the message, Chu thought how Brandon won't be making the meal and wrote him back an offer.

He said that it's best that he and Abebe met them in Vermont and cook the meal themselves.

When Brandon read the message, he was confused and forwarded it to Rina right away. She couldn't believe it too; Chu and Abebe asked for the time, date, and location.

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Chu & Abebe Make the 6-Hour Trip to Vermont to Cook for their Customer

Together with their colleague Joe Anonuevo, Chu and Abebe drove to Vermont in their pickup and pulled up at the house of Rina's mom the next day.

They set up a fryer in the back of the pickup and stayed outside to ensure the meal is a surprise and because of the pandemic.

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Because it was cold, it required several hours for the fryer to get up to the needed temperature.

When they finally made the meal, Chu said it turned out to be the most ideal tempura broccoli they've ever made because they made it with so much love.

When the smell started entering the house, Rina explains her mom needed some time to realize what was happening.

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She then recognized that it's from Baltimore. For Chu, it was a powerful moment meeting the mom of Rina. They didn't know her name; however, they recognized her face from when she visited.

All smiles, Chu thanked her countless times. Rina said her mom ate the meal successfully, despite the difficulties she had.

Sources:

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