



Michal Klimberg (left) and Shir Halpern are launching Make Eat, a shared cooking space for small-scale chefs, in an old candy factory in Israel. (Photo: Afik Gabay)

Move over, WeWork: Co-cooking spaces are having a moment

Two food entrepreneurs in Israel are turning an old candy factory into a huge workspace to help other fledgling food manufacturers grow their businesses. And they're not alone.

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When Carmit Candy Co. moved to a new location in southern Israel in 2018, it left behind a 100,000-square-foot factory that includes production, storage and kitchen space in Rishon Lezion. But after more than a year sitting idle, the factory is taking on new life: as a multi-tenant "co-cooking" space to help small-scale, independent food makers grow their businesses. They're calling it Make Eat, and it's scheduled for a January 2020 opening.

"I wanted to take the idea of food manufacturing and update it to the world today," Michal Klimberg, Make Eat's co-founder, told the Times of Israel. "I wanted a [WeWork \(https://www.fromthegrapevine.com/blogs/innovation/weworks-expansion-plans-include-atlanta-and-place-rest-your-head\)](https://www.fromthegrapevine.com/blogs/innovation/weworks-expansion-plans-include-atlanta-and-place-rest-your-head) for the food industry."



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WeWork's offices are often occupied by remote workers and small business owners who benefit from the connection and networking. (Photo: WeWork)

Make Eat is a small glimmer of a larger spark that's igniting the food world: shared culinary development spaces, similar to the co-working model that's made WeWork, **also founded by an Israeli** (<https://www.fromthegrapevine.com/blogs/innovation/wework-co-founder-talks-about-community-techcrunch-disrupt>), widely successful. And they're popping up all over, from church basements in New England to the aforementioned abandoned candy factory in Israel and even a defunct restaurant in Croatia. Fledgling chefs with limited budgets can set up shop in a fully equipped kitchen, with plenty of opportunities for collaborating, networking and sharing, inside buildings that would otherwise sit empty, or in some cases, unused for much of the day.

"Paying a monthly membership fee to access a commercial kitchen that covers cleaning, water, waste, electricity and equipment repairs definitely takes a lot of stress out of the mix for food producers," said Ashley Colpaart, founder of The Food Corridor, a Colorado-based tech startup that connects budding food entrepreneurs with commercial production space. "With the rise in

automation and the total cost of production of professionally made food, the domestic kitchen may be becoming obsolete. I see co-cooking, community and shared-use kitchens as the meeting places, gyms and yoga studios of the future."



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Dawn Missirlian slices pineapples at Union Kitchen, a co-cooking space in Washington, D.C. She's the owner of Green Heart Juice Shop. (Photo: BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP/Getty Images)

Sometimes, to enact this kind of change, the world around us has to change, too. In Bridgeport, Conn., for example, city zoning laws were recently changed to allow houses of worship to produce food commercially. Now, the basement of the United Congregational Church has been converted into an 800-square-foot, restaurant-quality kitchen with spacious metal counters, deep sinks, a large stove and a walk-in refrigerator and freezer. For a time, it became a soup kitchen and food pantry for the church to serve 8,700 hot meals and 90,000 meals' worth of groceries a year. But on days when the church isn't using it, the space is available for rent, at a reasonable rate, to food entrepreneurs with 10 or fewer employees.

"This space is meant to be an incubator and encourage growth and developing small business," said Michelle Lapine McCabe, director of community engagement and food access for The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport. "It's meant to be a starting point."

Small-scale chefs are increasingly drawn to the idea of shared cooking "incubators," (<https://www.fromthegrapevine.com/innovation/this-food-incubator-will-change-the-way-you-eat>) for several reasons: For one, it releases them from the confines of their home kitchens, where mass production is next to impossible. But on a deeper level, it's about bouncing ideas off one another, easy access to advice and guidance, and safe, convenient grounds for taste-testing.



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Victoria Stallings cuts cake at Union Kitchen. She's hoping to grow her cake business, Victoria's Other Secret, with the help of Union Kitchen. (Photo: BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/AFP/Getty Images)

"The co-cooking model has helped me cut costs immensely," said Abhay Singh, who rents a 300-square-foot kitchen through FoodCoWorks in Vikrholi, India. "Since it's fully equipped, I saved on setup and began my operations within a month of signing up with them."

With many financial and regulatory obstacles removed, Singh was able to launch Take On Hunger, a corporate breakfast catering service. His venture is part of a growing startup ecosystem in India that's thriving on co-living, co-working and, now, co-cooking spaces.

Back in Israel, the [startup ecosystem \(https://www.fromthegrapevine.com/innovation/these-are-worlds-top-global-startup-ecosystems\)](https://www.fromthegrapevine.com/innovation/these-are-worlds-top-global-startup-ecosystems) already runs deep, and Klimberg and her co-founder, Shir Halpern, are eager to see the co-cooking movement take shape in their home country.

“We have the potential to bring out people who are working in their houses and offer them the right kind of supervision,” Halpern said. “Make Eat is something that takes us back to the homemade, cottage industries but also pulls from the world of shared spaces.”

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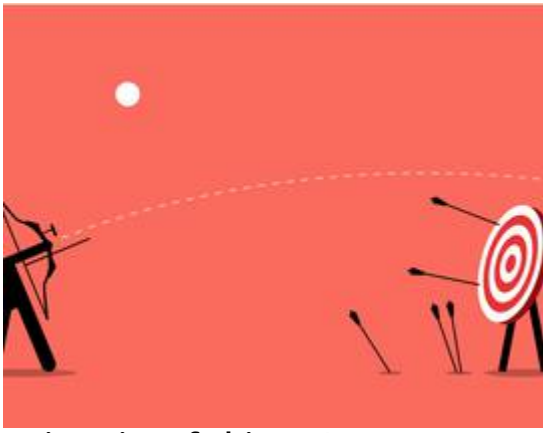
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