



Cookbook store thrives in the age of Amazon

A trained chef with a talent for teaching and a love of cookbooks, Jonathan Cheung was one of those rare retailers who was able to combine both of his passions and turn it into a successful Montreal business.

After attending cooking school in Vancouver in 1999, Jonathan moved to Hong Kong, where he started working in various restaurants. In a recent interview with CultMontreal, he said grew up in the restaurant business in Vancouver. His dad is more of the management side of it and he currently lives in Hong Kong where he owns a restaurant.) In 2004 Jonathan moved to Montreal and stayed. He had grown up in the restaurant business - his dad lives in Hong Kong where he owns a restaurant - and wanted to make a go of it in Quebec.

After working at the Nellie, he decided to write a business plan for a new type of Cooking School/Cookbook Store in July of 2015. By the end of November, Appetite for Books was open for business. Jonathan got the idea from a store that had a similar format in Vancouver called Barbara-Jo's Books to Cooks. He figured that it would be a good idea to have one in Montreal as well.

His second option was to open a restaurant but he was really young at the time and new to the city so the odds of success weren't great. At least with the store Jonathan could still cook by doing classes (in English). More importantly, he had always enjoyed teaching and talking to people about food.

Each class is centred around a specific recipe in one of the store's most popular cookbooks. He tries not to tackle anything really complicated and he doesn't use any special restaurant tricks or ingredients. "I don't have professional equipment here and anything you see here you can buy at a regular grocery store", he says. "I take 10 people in each class and I demo everything. They bring their own wine and I do all the cooking. They don't have to exert any effort except eating. They go home with a great recipe and cookbook. And classes are sold out months in advance.

Fortunately for Jonathan, there's no market for ebooks in the cookbook world so Amazon is not a factor. "Online recipes are fine for a quick reference, but cookbooks are works of art. It's so easy to get lost in them," he explains.

"A lot of cookbooks are released each year, but there are also a lot of books out there that people have had for 30, 40, or 50 years, and they'll replace when it wears out! So the cookbook world is thriving," he adds. Three of Jonathan's current favourites include: *David Tanis Market Cooking: Recipes and Revelations*, *Ingredient* by David Tanis; *Jeremy Dinner: Changing the Game* by Melissa Clark; and *On Vegetables: Modern Recipes for the Home Kitchen* by Jeremy Fox.

Appetite for Books, 388 Victoria Ave., Montreal

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