



*I am chef and proprietor of The Cottage Restaurant, Buffalo Boy Restaurant, My Kitchen and Chef Shams sauces*

## My Kitchen by Sham Hanifa and other culinary businesses

**Name**  
Sham Hanifa

**Country**  
Ireland

**Find out more**  
[www.shamhanifa.ie](http://www.shamhanifa.ie)

## Motivation

My parents and grandmother owned their own businesses in Malaysia, so entrepreneurship was in the family. Growing up, I worked in many hospitality businesses and really admired the owners of these businesses. From a young age, I always dreamed of owning my own business.

## Your Story

I arrived in Ireland, to Leitrim, in 2000 to work as a chef in a newly opened hotel. While working, I came across a small restaurant in a waterside cottage in a nearby village. I drove by it one day in late 2007 and saw it had closed and was available to lease. So, I enquired, and a month later, I signed the lease. It happened quickly after years of dreaming!

## Challenges



**Recession:** In 2008, Ireland and the world were in recession so there was not much money around for eating out. Just 2 years after opening in 2009, the restaurant got completely flooded. The landlord was great, and we could repair it as we wanted.

**Weather Crisis:** Then that Christmas, there was bad weather and heavy snow and we saw nights when the restaurant was fully booked, 70 seats, and all except four people cancelled. To create income, I started preparing food for farmers markets and developing my sauces.

**Language skills:** Regarding challenges specifically because I was not from Ireland, there were none for me apart from needing to improve my English in the early years. However, I see others who are not sure about their legal status to work, or have the confidence to take on a challenge in a new environment

## Acomplishments



I am Malaysian, I bring something new to this area that nobody else can offer, people want authenticity, and storytelling, be proud of who you are, where you came from and add your story to what you are offering.

## What interventions/ support did you receive?



First I took English classes, and then the LEO (Local Enterprise Office ) was great, they offer so much support and help you get the best ones for your business. Also entering awards, our sauces won the Gold medal at Blas na hEireann (National Food Awards), which brings great publicity and credibility. It's important to build a network and support other businesses, we are involved in the Taste Leitrim network and that attracts people to come and eat in Leitrim, so everyone's business benefits

## Describe the impact of these interventions?



I joined a local football team which helped me practice my English but also was the start of me building a network in the community. The friends I made were a huge support and helped me understand how the community worked.

## Were interventions specifically for underrepresented entrepreneurs?



In terms of raising finance, I have grown the businesses incrementally. The interventions were not specifically for underrepresented entrepreneurs, except for the English classes. The other supports are there for everyone, you just need to look for them and have a solid idea and plan

## What interventions or supports would help you achieve those plans and visions?



There are plenty of supports there, you just have to look for them and avail of them.

## Future Plans

*I am about to open a cookery school and am working on my first cookbook.*

Follow Sham's journey, visit his [website](#)



Co-funded by  
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them