

Bayonne restaurant embroiled in social media controversy about Board of Education candidate

Buon Appetito took down a commercial they shot with Mike Shatravka after pressure on social media

Daniel Israel - October 6, 2020



Buon Appetito at 908 Broadway, by Google Maps.

A local restaurant in Bayonne has taken down a video commercial promoting their business after pressure from residents on social media due aimed at the producer of the video.

Buon Appetito, a local Italian restaurant located at 908 Broadway, caught flak from residents over the political views of local media producer Mike Shatravka. Shatravka is running for the Bayonne Board of Education on the "Make Bayonne Great" slate alongside fellow Republicans Michael Alonso and Charles Shepard.

In late September, Buon Appetito apologized in a statement on social media "for incorporating any politics" in their content and thanked residents "for addressing an important topic."

In a note to all Bayonne residents, owners Nico and Massimo Aronson of Buon Appetito hoped to end the controversy: "We don't support any political views. We are not, in any way, politically aligned with any parties. We try not to have or show any political views on our page."

It started with a video

Their entanglement with Shatravka began when they wanted to make a commercial about the restaurant.

The apology post continued: "We saw Mike Shatravka's video production work, and unknowing about Mike Shatravka's involvement in politics, we worked with him to highlight the opening of our new Bagel Café. We only worked with his video team and nothing else."

While the commercial was innocent of any politics, some residents called out Buon Appetito for unknowingly working with Shatravka.

According to Bayonne resident Nina Kowalczyk, a lot of the momentum against the commercial was generated within the private Facebook group Concerned Public School Parents of Bayonne.

Kowalczyk said members of the group led calls for Buon Appetito to take the commercial down.

According to their page, the group is "a forum in which citizens of Bayonne can express their opinions and ask questions regarding the state of education in the City of Bayonne."

Attempts to join or contact the group by the Bayonne Community News were left pending.

Regardless of where on social media it happened, residents were unhappy about the collaboration and the restaurant ultimately obliged with resident requests to take down the commercial.

According to Buon Appetito, all posts with or pertaining to Shatravka have now been taken down on their social media and he has done the same.

Shatravka responds

While Buon Appetito has apologized, Shatravka doubled down.

In response to the fiasco, Shatravka released a video claiming that the successful efforts to have Buon Appetito take down the commercial he made with them was a result of "bullying."

"Recently our local academics who preach tolerance and acceptance bullied and harassed one of our local Bayonne businesses into deleting a totally neutral non-political food commercial that I shot for them," Shatravka wrote on Facebook, alluding to the group Concerned Public School Parents of Bayonne.

According to Kowalczyk, the calls to remove the video by the group was "bullying and intimidation" which she said "should not be tolerated in the community, especially by the people we trust dearly to educate and guide our children."

In his video, Shatravka said the efforts to have Buon Appetito take the commercial down were "un-American." He said that attacking unaffiliated businesses who have only worked with him is wrong and is why is he campaigning against "political correctness."

Shatravka ended his video by offering local businesses in the city free commercials. He said that any business who reaches out to him will get a one-minute commercial for free in order to “come together as a community.”

Residents react

While some were angered in response to Buon Appetito’s announcement on Facebook, many residents voiced their pleasure in the comments.

Vince Arvello said, “A wise man once said ‘A man is known by the company he keeps’ – Thanks for holding true to that by no longer associating with the party in question here.”

“I’m glad you guys addressed this,” Elizabeth Reyes, another Bayonne resident said.

Gina Marie said: “Thank you for this clarification. I would have HATED to no longer order from you.”

Some residents commented telling Buon Appetito to keep doing their thing.

“Nico and Massimo just keep doing what you doing bringing good food to the people of Bayonne,” Lee Vargas said. “As the saying goes don’t sweat the small stuff.”

“I honestly didn’t see it like that...,” Gia Rose said. “You guys are doing a great job! Just keep doing what you love.”

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