

## CULINARY DISTANCING COS PROFILES

### Matthew Schniper, Co-Founder of Culinary Distancing COS and Food & Drink Editor at Colorado Springs Independent

“Lauren and I conceived the Culinary Distancing COS group just before the first pandemic lockdown in 2020, anticipating the seemingly impossible road ahead for the food and drink industry. The concept was simple, financial support by way of to-go orders since on-site dining was prohibited. We had no idea how many community members would join up, and we were overjoyed to see thousands join us inside the first few weeks, eventually totaling more than 8,500 active members.”

“Those members became a meaningful force for good, showing restaurant and bar owners the impact of mission-driven community action. Based on our group survey of roughly 400 members and 50 restaurateurs, we know the businesses felt the love. One even said the group literally saved his business; without the members' support, he'd have folded. And a huge number of members found new-to-them places, some becoming favorites that they still frequent.”



“Assessing Culinary Distancing COS over the course of its first year, the data — including a social impact study by the Colorado Institute for Social Impact that showed a stunning \$1.1M in social return on investment — makes it clear that the group was a huge success. It more than achieved its communal intent and became a powerful assembly of caring people we couldn't have initially predicted. We're beyond grateful.”

“All we started with was an idea. The true credit goes to all the active members who participated on the group page and made the effort to regularly buy food and drink from our area businesses, to buoy them until the marketplace returns to a pre-pandemic normal. As of this writing, we still aren't there yet, with businesses struggling to hire new staff, keep up with increasing demand as restrictions ratchet down, and navigate this new phase of pandemic life, which holds the possibility of more surprises just around the corner.”

“But, just as the Colorado Springs community proved nearly a decade ago when fires and floods ravaged parts of our town, people will come together around a common cause and rally for their neighbors. It's a ray of light during dark times.”