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Local businesses weather the difficult storm

By *Sophie Braccini*

Tom Frainier, Moraga businessman and co-owner of Semifreddis bakery, continues to radiate his usual upbeat energy around town, talking, at a distance, with his friends and neighbors. The business he has been managing and led to a profitable growth over the last 32 years, Semifreddis, has experienced a 23% loss in sales over the last five weeks, but he hopes to weather the storm. Frainier notes that his business model, selling more than half of the breads and bakery specialties to retail stores over restaurants, has insulated the company somewhat better than other bakers who relied mostly on restaurants for their revenue.

Frainier and a majority of his workers continue to come normally to the Alameda production unit where the baking happens every day. Because he was concerned about disruption in the supply chain extra flour, salt and yeast were ordered.

On the factory floor, workers stay at least 6 feet apart and a friend of one of the managers sewed masks for everyone. Now not only do people wear gloves and hairnets but also face masks as they work all day. The safety of his workers is paramount to Frainier.

The resilient business owner has been able to avoid layoffs for now, but he is quite concerned for the survival of the whole fresh food industry and the restaurants. On the professional bakery's meeting room white board, Frainier has inscribed a quote from Winston Churchill during World War II: "When you are going through hell, keep going."

He is not quite sure of what Semifreddis will look like once the crisis subsides. Downsizing might be unavoidable down the road. Frainier hopes that the economy rebounds and that people go back to restaurants and consume the way they used to, in a not too distant future.

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[back](#)

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