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Startup

The Cookie Queen

For Tiffany Lewis, who turned a weekend hobby into a multi-faceted business, baking cookies is a bridge that brings people together

written by Rachel Gallaher

FOURTEEN YEARS AGO, Seattleite Tiffany Lewis, founder of the baking company Cookies With Tiffany, arrived in Columbus, Ohio, to start a job in the marketing department at JPMorgan Chase. A graduate of Chapman University—earning a degree in communications with an emphasis in public speaking—Lewis spent the years after college working in various corporate marketing positions before landing a job at Washington Mutual bank (WAMU). “When Chase acquired WAMU, I moved to Ohio for the job,” Lewis said. “It was the middle of winter, I had never been there, and I didn’t know anybody. I would go to work Monday through Friday, and on the weekends, I didn’t know what to do, so I turned back to something that brought me joy when I was growing up—and that was baking cookies.”



Courtesy of Tiffany Lewis



Jocelyn R.C.

ABOVE, FROM LEFT Tiffany Lewis previously worked with celebrity chef Curtis Stone. Lewis launched Cookies With Tiffany as a way to help build connection and bring joy.

Despite a very social personality and a love for meeting new people, Lewis found that the harsh Midwestern winters made it difficult to pop out and socialize, especially before she'd made friends. "Going to the store was my weekly outing," she recalled. "It gave me something productive to focus my attention on."

After baking all weekend, Lewis would return to the office on Monday morning with a plate of homemade baked treats—cookies, brownies, granola bars. Instead of just depositing them in the breakroom with a note, Lewis would send out an email to her department offering "cookies for a handshake."

"It got people to my desk," Lewis said, "and that helped me create a community in Columbus. The cookie broke down barriers, and soon people were saying hello and chatting with me in the halls. I ended up on four recreational volleyball teams through [the sharing of] cookies!"

After two-and-a-half years in Ohio, Lewis moved to California, where her sister was working on a master's degree, and she decided to pursue a degree at Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Pasadena. At the end of her courses, Australian celebrity chef Curtis Stone's team called the school looking for an intern, and Lewis landed the gig. "It was an incredible experience," she said. "I had the opportunity to fly around the world and help with food styling, research and development. That two-month internship turned into a job, and I was with him for almost three years."

After wrapping up her time with Stone, Lewis went freelance, picking up jobs including food styling for television chefs such as Giada De Laurentiis, instructing classes at Sur La Table, and launching The Table Together, a digital platform meant to inspire and encourage people to learn about (and connect through) cooking.

"Growing up, our family ate dinner together every night," Lewis said. "So, for me, food is much more than putting

together something to eat. It's a form of connection, a way to create memories with people who are important to us."

In 2017, Lewis returned to Seattle, where she worked as the chief operating officer at a local culinary company, developing its cooking classes and helping run the organization. Then in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Like many, Lewis was soon out of a job but, once again, found herself with an abundance of time on her hands.

"I started thinking, 'What is something that people need right now?'" Lewis remembers. "We were told to separate and stay apart, and I realized that people needed community, joy and cheer. They needed to know that someone was thinking about them."

Tapping into her network of friends and colleagues, Lewis launched Cookies With Tiffany, offering hand-baked, small-batch confections. She started by delivering cookies around the Seattle area, and soon the business grew—large companies began placing corporate gift orders, and Lewis developed a shipping program. Two years ago, she started selling at regional farmer's markets (from Ballard to Issaquah to Mercer Island), and in 2022, Lewis opened a bakeshop in the Madrona neighborhood.

In addition to classics such as chocolate chip, snickerdoodle and peanut butter, Cookies With Tiffany offers seasonal specials and holiday-themed flavors (don't miss the St. Patrick's Day Lucky Charms cookie)—all of which tap into the childhood nostalgia of baking with grandparents or enjoying a gooey chocolate chip-filled treat fresh from the oven. In June, the company started selling cookies at Mariner's games, and according to Lewis, they had sold out at every single game so far.

"Everybody loves a cookie," she said. "I've never offered a cookie to someone and had them say, 'No thanks.' The smile on people's faces when you hand one over—it's such a special moment—I love spreading happiness with cookies!" 🍪



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