

# A MEAN LOAF OF BREAD...A FAMILY'S PATH TO SUCCESS

*A Northwest Michigan family business has weathered a lot and is now smelling success!*

TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN, UNITED STATES, September 20, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The 2008 recession hit Michigan like a Tsunami. Thousands were jobless. Bankruptcies and unemployment soared. There was an exodus of people needing work.

In Traverse City, Michigan, Pearl and Pete Brown along with children Niesje, Johanna, Heidi, John and David, like tens of thousands of others, brainstormed around the kitchen table about how to stay afloat.

"Mom, you make a mean loaf of bread," said son David.

That was the trailhead for an amazing story and business.

"We got off to a flying start," said mother Pearl. "I baked bread, took it to sell at the Building 50 farmers market, and was shut down by the Michigan Department of Agriculture. Little did I know I was not complying with laws to sell food."

Much to their credit, the agency helped Pearl understand what to do and how to complete required forms. The odyssey of [Old Mission Bakery](#) began, backed by winning values, like putting people before profits, Pearl explained.

Like most small business, the success of the Bakery is borne out of sacrifice, long hours of work and innovation. The word entrepreneur, often misunderstood, rings clear and true here.

bread@oldmissionbakery.com

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813 S. Garfield

Traverse City, MI 49686

(231) 421-7018

M: 12-5:30 - T - F: 7-5:30



New Signage for Old Mission Bakery!

Husband Hank left his job recruiting people to serve in the food and pharmacy industries to help Pearl. They had to be all in. Among his skills, Hank was narrowly edged out of competing in the hammer throw at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992 and had coached track at the University of Wyoming.

Each of the five children, now young adults, gave up one year of college to work at the Bakery. This was after Pearl had dedicated twenty years to being a home-school mom.

It was old fashioned love, says Pearl, who taught herself to bake bread. Pearl is passionate about the process, including the magic of yeast and rising bread. "We adjust the yeast to the natural yeast in the air that varies with weather," Pearl says. "Rising bread is magical."

All of the breads are of American Heath Bakery vintage that is distinctive in texture as well as taste, appearance and smell when it's done, a 24-hour process. Originating in Europe, it is one of the world's favorite ancient breads.

Their ovens are a motley crew. One found in the basement of the Cook's House, received in barter for a year's worth of bread. Others were purchased over the years at restaurant supply stores. One they found along the side of a road that still pumps out loaves.

The Browns use natural ingredients and no preservatives. The bread has an average shelf life of three days. If it edges toward that date, it goes to Food Rescue that distributes it to food pantries in a five-county region. Nearly all ingredients are purchased locally like eggs, honey, beer and more.

The Bakery has been hard hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and recently renewed its commitment to distancing, masking and liberal use of sanitizer.

"It has been a period of pain, loss and anxiety," said Pete. "The loss of life in two of our staff families was unspeakably devastating. We've had financial hardship but have been thankful as well. We have great employees, the rock of our business, who work with us much as family. Our patrons have been patient and supportive. And, yes, we are thankful to have jobs."

"We are also thankful to [Venture North](#) and their Regional Resiliency Program that awarded us a \$5,000 grant to help during this dark period," said Pete. "We used the grant to design and install the first sign we've ever had! It draws customers like a beacon, the signature for where everything happens."

"Old Mission Bakery is one of many spectacular small businesses we've come to know through the Regional Resiliency Program which awarded grants to 302 businesses with about \$1.1 million in funding, all donated to the program through philanthropic giving or grant awards," said Laura Galbraith, President of Venture North. "All of these businesses are entrepreneur-driven and Old

Mission's story is inspiring and mouth-watering for all."

While fully vaccinated, Pearl still became infected with COVID-19 and it lingers with 'long haul' consequences.

"I've lost my sense of smell and taste," she announced. "I'm the official inventor and taster of our products. I hope the booster shot helps. Until then, I've formed a team to support us. It's another mountain to climb but we'll get over it and move on."

"We are so excited about a new product still in the works," said Pearl. "Don't tell anyone. But, I guess you can - it's a coffee flatbread. We're still playing with ingredients and the name. This could become the bomb of our line, even bigger than our variety of buns that are flying off shelves from Detroit to Petoskey."

"Wouldn't it be something if the area also became known as the 'coffee bread capital of the world?'" she asked.

It certainly would. Some might say it certainly will!

Laura Galbraith  
Venture North Funding and Development  
+1 231-995-7110  
[email us here](#)  
Visit us on social media:  
[Facebook](#)

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