

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

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

TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN, UNITED STATES, September 21, 2021

/EINPresswire.com/ -- PLEASE NOTE:

With our apologies to the Brown family and readers, below is the correct version of this story that was first issued on 9/20/21. Again, our regrets to all for the mixup involving this inspiring story.

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 lead inspector for Michigan Department of Agriculture, Laurie Sorensen

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New Signage for Old Mission Bakery!

helped Pearl understand what steps to take to become a legal value-added food producer. 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.

Husband Pete's recruiting firm that specialized in the food and pharmaceutical industries shriveled in the wake of the 2008 market crash. He used the remaining funds to spearhead Pearl bread baking venture. They had to be all in. Among his skills, Pete 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. "Our sourdough feeds off of the natural yeast in the air that varies with weather," Pearl says. "Rising bread is magical."

Almost all of the breads are American hearth which is distinctive in texture as well as taste, appearance and smell when it's done, a 24-hour process, brought over from Europe, tweaked by our ancestors based on whatever was available to them. Our bread is all about nostalgia. These are the memories we all have of our grandparent's kitchens.

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 seven days. If it edges toward that date, it goes to Food Rescue that distributes it to food pantries in a five-county region. All the ingredients are purchased as close to home as possible. Eggs, honey, beer, maple syrup 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.”

In March of 2020 Pearl became ill with Covid-19. She remained sick for 14 months with Long Haul Covid-19. The vaccine was a game changer for Pearl and caused the virus to mostly clear her body. All except one remaining symptom, “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 other products that are flying off shelves from Grand Rapids 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!

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