

Episode 100

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SPEAKERS

Jason Duff, Carly Bogard, Hannah Wischmeyer, Ethan DeLeon

H

Hannah Wischmeyer 00:00

I know that if I'm deathly ill, she's going to step in regardless of how many days she worked that week and take care of the stuff. You don't, you don't often have that with any other partner other than family.

E

Ethan DeLeon 00:15

Welcome to the Small Nation Podcast brought to you by Coverlink Insurance, where people are more important than policies. On this show, we unpack lessons from entrepreneurs, break down development strategies, and do deep dives on small town success. Our goal is to provide value to our listeners by hosting conversations that teach, inform, and inspire. Hey everyone, my name is Ethan DeLeon, and I'm here in the studio with the founder and CEO of Small Nation, Jason Duff. Today we're excited to be hosting the founders and owners of The Morning Riot, Carly Bogard and Hannah Wischmeyer. Welcome, guys.

H

Hannah Wischmeyer 00:49

Thanks. Thanks for having us.

J

Jason Duff 00:51

These sisters, which you guys are family, right?

H

Hannah Wischmeyer 00:55

Yes.

C

Carly Bogard 00:56

Yes.

J

Jason Duff 00:56

Do you claim each other all the time?



Carly Bogard 00:57

Just confirming that. No.



Hannah Wischmeyer 00:59

99%.



Jason Duff 01:00

These sisters are rock stars. And I'm excited about this episode today because we're going to talk about food. We're going to talk about family. We're going to talk about local. It is really kind of everything that a lot of our values and our show embodies. But I love food. And I happen to love bread. And our office is located in the Main Street Marketplace. And if you've not been to Bellefontaine, kind of right in the center of the town was a building that was the former Center City Mall. Like if you go back in time into vintage years, which I'm old enough to remember the vintage years, and that was like in the '80s, it was kind of like individual suites. But the sad thing is, is the building, you know, actually I should say prior to that, that was a G.C. Murphy's department store. So back in the '30s, '40s, '50s, '60s, up until 1970, in downtown Bellefontaine, that is where there was a deli counter. There was fresh roasted nuts, and people talk about the aroma that permeated through the department store. And then in the store, they had everything from clothing to dry goods to gifts that you could give your other family members. But when it happened in the building, G.C. Murphy's closed, And then when the, the City Center Mall came in, the building was kind of this big empty black box. And when we acquired it back in about 2007, 2008, there was only one tenant in the building. And I was so hoping when I first bought the building that that tenant would renew. And it was a knife and gun store and it was located right in the front. And I remember going to Dave and talking to Dave about, his lease renewal. And I said, Dave, are you going to renew your lease? And he said, no. I'm like, Dave, why? He's like, I don't feel safe here. Dave was a knife and gun store. Okay, so that tells you anything about the situation at Bellefontaine at that time. It was not very good.



Hannah Wischmeyer 02:57

Yeah.



Jason Duff 02:57

But fast forward to today, and there is a rockstar group of tenants. In fact, every suite in the building is occupied. And a lot of the credit because of that is because of Hannah and Carly and their business, Rise Bakehouse. And that business has now moved to being The Morning Riot. So I'm excited to hear that journey. But ladies, welcome to the show.



Hannah Wischmeyer 03:19

Thank you. Thank you.



Carly Bogard 03:19

Yeah, so I'm curious, what is— explain to our audience if they're not familiar, or maybe they're familiar with Rise, you know, what is The Morning Riot?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 03:27

So we, um, describe it to people as an alien disco brunch bar.

J**Jason Duff** 03:34

Yes. It's all of those things.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 03:36

I love that. And, you know, I would say that for Carly and I, this is probably the most authentic iteration of this bakery business that we've had over the years. And when we had a conversation about wanting to open up a restaurant and serve this food in town, it was, well, how's it going to look? Are we going to continue with the brand of Rise Bakehouse? Well, that doesn't feel like it fits anymore. So we decided to go as loud and as authentic as we could. And there's some weird stuff in there.

J**Jason Duff** 04:11

Yeah. Well, it's interesting because I imagine when you were thinking about making this change, there's a lot of fear and uncertainty anytime you go from something that people know, which I'm excited for you to explain more about what Ryot's Bakehouse was and how it got started. And of course, the now today, the Morning Riot. But can you speak a little bit about like, how did you step out your comfort zone, number one, to like start a business, but also having the confidence and the courage to do big, bold things?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 04:43

I think we knew exactly what we wanted. Hannah and I are foodies and frequent other restaurants that, you know, in different towns., and we love a lot of things in Bellefontaine, but there was nothing like this yet. And I think we wanted to bring that to the people, bring it to our small town, and I think we've done that. And I should add a side note here. Carly told me we were going to do it. No choice. It was, yeah, I did not have an option here. She came and she said, I want to open a restaurant. This is what I want to serve. And it was just going from there.

C**Carly Bogard** 05:17

That's awesome. So were you originally from the Bellefontaine area? Where did you grow up? And then what was the first iteration of this bakery? What did it look like?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 05:27

So we actually were born in Dayton and mostly, most of our childhood was spent in Tipp City.

J**Jason Duff** 05:34

Tipp is a great town.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 05:35

It is a great town. And we loved it. Our father ended up moving to the lake for his construction business and just kind of never came back. And eventually he's like, hey, do you guys want to live up here with me? We're like, sure. Uh, but our parents both owned, when we were very, very young, several bagel shops down in the Dayton area.

C**Carly Bogard** 05:54

Oh wow.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 05:55

They did wholesale for a lot of the universities and, uh, in restaurants down there. And then they also had their own, their own delis and, uh, retail spaces. Did you, growing up, did you have duties or responsibilities in the We mostly would take the cream cheese cups out to the woods and catch bees and freeze them.

C**Carly Bogard** 06:15

Yes, and freeze them.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 06:17

Yeah, you know, make little displays. Uh, we were very young. I have fond memories of sitting in a box truck with my dad, and he would take me to Michigan, and I just thought it was the coolest thing in the world. Um, probably not today, probably a very boring trip, but it was exciting.

J**Jason Duff** 06:33

Yeah, there's something powerful about You know, whether we like it or not, like, we inherit things from our parents and grandparents and family, um, both the good and bad things. Sometimes, like, as I get older, I like look in the mirror and I'm like, I think I, I, I'm reminding myself of the things I didn't like in some of my parents. But you, you just have, uh, part of, part of that journey. Uh, but tell me, like, how did you learn to bake? Like, I don't know about you, but I— baking for me is either I'm like, oh my gosh, it just came out and actually tastes good. Or I bake something and it's like I burn it to a crisp. It's an art and a science. How did you learn about baking?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 07:11

I kind of remember having this conversation with you a few years ago.

J**Jason Duff** 07:15

This is why you eat your food, by the way.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 07:18

And chuckling when you said how much of a science it is, because we don't feel that way about it anymore. Now it feels intuitive. And I think once you pass that point, it's an extremely satisfying craft. When I first started baking, I had no baking experience. My mom wasn't a baker, our grandparents weren't bakers. The bagel shops that they owned were very industrial. They were more factories. It was machines rolling the bagels, not people. So in 2016, I believe it was, I had my first son, who's now 9 years old, and I had 3 months of maternity leave. I went back to work for a month or 2 and was a store manager at Aldi at the time, and it was, you know, 60 hours a week easily. And I just said, I don't want to do this anymore. So I came home to stay with him, and that worked for about 6 months, and then I was painfully bored.

C**Carly Bogard** 08:19

Yeah.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 08:20

There was a farmer's market opening up down the road, and I offered to volunteer and help them get it off the ground and just be whatever they needed. If they needed someone to help set up or run stalls, I was there for it, and I took him along with me every time. The farmer's market struggled to keep vendors, to keep customer traffic up, and they never had a baked goods person. So I was trying to figure out how I could help. The market. And I said, well, I'm sure I can bake something. Like, how hard can it be? Yeah. Wow. Which is hilarious if you've ever started baking. It's hilarious. So I went home and I made some things, and they were terrible, but I didn't know it.

J**Jason Duff** 09:02

And did you have to eat some of these things?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 09:04

But some of the early pictures that we get to see now, they are awful. They look like rocks. They tasted like rocks too. But the customers were really, really nice. They were encouraging, and they liked, they loved the meaning behind what we were doing, the purpose behind the way we were baking, which was without preservatives, clean ingredients, local ingredients whenever we could get our hands on them, you know, with intention on what we wanted to feed our kids, what we would be comfortable putting on their plates was how we chose our products and ingredients. So they were all very encouraging. We ended up at the Logan County Farmers Market, which is much larger, for a year or two. And the bread started to get better after a year or two.

C**Carly Bogard** 09:53

Yeah. Some— got your reps in, huh?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 09:56

Yes, exactly. Exactly. So Carly—

J**Jason Duff** 09:59

Which, for those listening, what were some of the products that you were selling? And I just remember getting introduced to your sourdough, but I don't know if it started with sourdough first.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 10:09

No, at first, the original name of the bakery was Bahana Bread.

J**Jason Duff** 10:15

Ooh, Bahana Bread.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 10:16

I like it. We started with banana bread. And then it seemed a little silly after a while. It was like, well, we actually don't want a bunch of sugar in our bread. And bananas aren't really a local ingredient that are in season ever. So maybe we should switch it around a little bit. We moved more towards artisan breads and really stuck with that. It was like rolls, artisan breads. We did some quick breads. No sourdough for a year or two. And then we moved into, we started playing around with sourdough. We picked up the wholesale account from Brew Fountain with the pretzels. Wow. And then started doing pretzels and bagels. And pastries came when we moved into the marketplace.

J**Jason Duff** 10:55

There's a really important lesson, and I've shared this with a few guests and people that come in. I love the Brew Fountain example because about the same time that you were starting in the farmer's market, a group of guys here in town that founded a club called the Bellefontaine Body Bearding Club, uh, started like hosting events with other bearded groups from around the country to come to Bellefontaine. And meeting Jeremy and Brian and Adam and literally them deciding after seeing other restaurants open up here— the craft beer scene was not very good here. You had to drive 60 miles away to get a good craft beer. And We got to interview Adam on the podcast. I think it's one of the first 5 episodes about the Brew Fountain story, but he celebrated you guys because in the beginning their kitchen was like a closet, tiny, and they wanted to serve good pretzels for the people drinking beer. And because Hannah and Carly had kind of perfected the pretzel recipe, he, I think, mentioned they did like a competition of area bakeries to say, We need pretzels, who would be interested in helping us source this? And a number of other bakers designed it, but yours by far stood out and the creativity behind yours was extra special too.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 12:13

Well, so there's two parts to this. I recall this very distinctly. It was a great day. But yes, we went in, their current pretzel maker was, I believe, leaving and they needed someone that could I could take it over almost immediately, seamlessly, so that they didn't lose any quality to the product or what the customers expected. No pressure. Yeah, yeah. And also, when you get here, by the way, there's other bakers here that are also watching, that are also vying for the account. And I had no experience at that point. I was just very matter of fact when we got there, like, I'm gonna take videos, I can easily replicate what they're doing already, and I can also, if I'm making notes, give him almost immediate pricing if I'm prepared. So I think that's what Adam appreciated. So we were doing the pretzels with their pretzel recipe for several months. And then he said, "I don't want this anymore. I want something else." And I'm like, "Oh." Surprise. "Okay, I didn't know I had to develop recipes for you." Like, I thought I was just doing the labor, right? And I think the product that we came up with was exceptional compared to what they were serving prior, which was also very good.

J**Jason Duff** 13:25

As a consumer, I will vouch that they were exceptional. The thing that was unique about it, and I use this example to help other restaurants, is that they were shaped like mustaches.

C**Carly Bogard** 13:36

Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 13:36

So you could actually hold them up for that perfect Instagrammable moment, that TikTok, that video of, of digital content. But, you know, the price point. I mean, you had— they had the wholesale amount that they're paying Ray's Bakehouse, which is now, you know, Hannah and Carly in the Morning Riot. But their servers were trained to upsell. And this is a really big thing in sales and in business. Um, and I, I, I want to help as many people be as profitable and successful because profit and, um, energy are kind of like the same things. When your business makes more money, you can invest more in your people and your equipment and all those things. But Their servers were really well trained at Proof Fountain to say, would you like to add the locally made mustard and the house-made beer cheese? What do you think the conversion rate on those two asks were? Like high, like 80%.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 14:26

I was gonna say 80%.

J**Jason Duff** 14:27

Yeah, it's like 80%. So then the appetizer, and I think when it first started out, maybe it was \$7.95, you know, \$2, \$2 for the mustard and the beer cheese, but a great quality product and a great experience and also an Instagrammable moment. I use that example because I really think the work that you all did set Brew Fountain up for success, but then also tied back to help you have the confidence maybe to say, well, we are forced to innovate this pretzel recipe. What else can we innovate?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 14:57

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah, we actually, after we established that pretzel recipe, we use a similar process for our bagels, which I won't get too technical boring back into history, but originally bagels were not boiled. They were finished in a lye solution like pretzels. So we still use that method for our bagels and our pretzels. Wow.

C**Carly Bogard** 15:23

Just unique now, right? Because most of them are boiled. Yes.

J**Jason Duff** 15:26

So going from the farmer's market, and as you connect with a lot of communities, those that have farmer's markets, and they're kind of rare. Some communities don't have that history of having makers and creators and farmers. We've been very lucky because we are an agricultural-based community. People have stepped up to participate, serve, volunteer, donate money to a farmers market. But what were some of the lessons that you learned, both of being a vendor, but then also being an advocate and volunteer?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 16:00

Well, I think that the farmers market always really fit our cooking and baking style just because we're saturated with local producers and the beautiful products that they have to offer. Our farmers market up here in Logan County is amazing. If you frequent them or you've been to a lot of other communities, it's unheard of for the size of our community to have the market that we do. The vendors are very supported and a lot of local restaurants around here use the local vendors. Their prices are acceptable or accessible. Their quality is exceptional. So I would say it's a great way to get almost immediate feedback from your customer base. They tell you what they want, what they're looking for. They will come back the next week and say, listen, you know, this molded in 1 or 2 days, or I didn't think that the cheese was as forward as it needed to be, or there wasn't enough chocolate in this croissant.

J**Jason Duff** 16:59

You know, whether you like the feedback or not, you're probably going to get it, right? Absolutely. Which really, any feedback, even if it stings a little bit, it's good feedback.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 17:07

Yeah, and I think that's probably one of the most important things about being an entrepreneur is how you take that feedback. It all has value. It really almost all has value. And if you can not take it personally and look at it as a way to improve what you're offering, I think your growth potential is kind of endless.

C**Carly Bogard** 17:30

Yeah, I love that.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 17:32

I love the farmers market. I feel like it's a slowdown compared to, you know, everyday life, and you get to talk to the customers and they want to learn. They want to learn about the bread. I want to learn about other people's products that they're selling at the farmers market. So it's just a really nice Saturday tradition. Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 17:53

So we've talked about the farmers market and buying local and, and spent a lot of time about makers, people people, you know, sometimes it's not just food. They may be— formulate soaps, they maybe help curate honeys. Like, I, I, you know, people think that it's very seasonal, and it is because of growing, of just the nature of growing. But there are some permanent vendors out of the farmers market. And the other thing I really admire about a lot of our retailers and some of the antique malls and things, they allow places for those makers and producers to sell year-round too. Yeah. Which, in your menu, can you speak to a little bit of what makes your product different and some of the, the cheeses and the, the vendors that, that you buy from locally to make your product?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 18:44

Um, so all of our bread is made by us. Uh, that includes croissants, pastries, sourdough, bagels. Yeah, pretzels. We get local cheese from Blue Jacket Dairy, Hall's Trace. If you haven't tried it, you should. We get all of our meat from Stembel's Butcher and Market. Yeah. That's bacon, pork, chicken. We cook it all. So everything, you know, no added ingredients. Local eggs. Yep, we use only local pasture-raised eggs. Literally from a farmer down the road. Yeah. Extremely fresh, extremely high quality. Our milk is from Indian Creek Creamery, which we use in all of our pastries and coffee drinks. We have a full coffee bar. We also use local honey, and that's in a lot of our sauces, in our pastries. All of our sauces are housemade. Yep. So that's just a few. We've got a list of roughly 12 to 15 rotating vendors that we buy from weekly.

C**Carly Bogard** 19:49

That quality carries through to the final product. Product, right?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 19:51

Yeah.

J**Jason Duff** 19:52

Can I share one of the criticisms that I hear? And, you know, you get on social media feeds, and I saw something last week is that someone was complaining about the restaurants we have in the area. And really, probably one of the points of pride that I have is I think we have some of the best dining options. And you mentioned this, for the size of the town, maybe even in the state. I mean, when you've got award-winning restaurants and people that are driving an hour or 2 hours to come eat here, that says something. But there was this kind of annoying Facebook posts of people complaining that the restaurants were all too expensive and this person wouldn't even step foot unless the prices were half of what that is. So do you get— how do you handle that criticism when you're hiring local people, when you're curating a unique experience and you're utilizing local products, which I imagine sometimes would be double what you would see in a grocery store, if not more? How do you handle that criticism?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 20:52

So I like when I can handle it face to face, because we often have people walking up and they say— we might even be closed, right? And they come to the door and they say, "I need a loaf of bread. Can I buy a loaf of bread?" "Absolutely. Would you like this kind, this kind? You know, it's \$10 a loaf for a 2-pound loaf." And, you know, part of the population really kind of recoils from that. And they're like, "I can never spend that money." on a loaf of bread. If I have the opportunity to explain to them why it's \$10 a loaf and what other local ingredients we're buying, and that the bread is only 3 or 4 ingredients compared to the 30 you're going to find on the shelf at the grocery store, they completely change their perspective. And they come back and they buy more bread. When you're interacting with someone on Facebook or someone online, especially anonymous posters, You can only do the best that you can do. They may not want to hear what's different about your bread. They may not value what's different about your product. We're not here to serve everybody. We want to serve the people that do value those things and hopefully convert the perspective of some people that don't right now.

C**Carly Bogard** 22:04

Right. Yeah, I love that. That's really good perspective. Take that conversation offline. I think that lesson can carry through to all types of businesses, not just a bakery. But I love, I love you guys' story and how you went from farmers market iteration to, you know, landing your first deal with Brew Fountain. And I, you know, I want to talk a little bit about how that changed your business. Like, how did that empower you? And then like, what were the steps after that? Were you, you know, onboarding other restaurants or what did your business model like, how did it continue to evolve and morph?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 22:36

Yeah, so I think after we brought Brew Fountain on, there may have been another year that we were baking out of— it was a 130-square-foot trailer, trailer kitchen. Yeah, I mean, I did not have a dining room table anymore. There were shelves and mixers everywhere. It was not a— it was not an eating space. Yeah, any longer. Um, Carly was— that's when Carly came on. She helped me bake there. But we started bagels for the farmer's market. We started doing pretzels for other restaurants. I was hand mixing all of our sourdoughs, so massive tubs of 40 pounds of sourdough.



Jason Duff 23:11

You didn't need to work out.



Hannah Wischmeyer 23:12

I was going to say.



Carly Bogard 23:13

You're working out.



Jason Duff 23:14

I was pregnant.



Hannah Wischmeyer 23:16

Oh, man. Phil helped me a lot with the mixing of those huge bins because we were, you know, we would make 40 to 50 loaves or 60 loaves and take them out to the market. And when you're doing that in a kitchen where you have one oven, I also rusted out my oven by pouring water in it to create a steam chamber. That was a special assignment.



Jason Duff 23:35

That's a good morning.



Hannah Wischmeyer 23:36

Yeah, it worked, though. But when you're baking like that in that kind of kitchen with the limitations that we had, it's a 16-hour ordeal. And you may go to bed for 2 or 3 hours, but then you're up packing it all after it's cooled. So it's very intense. And Carly and I are extremely efficiency-minded. Most of our other positions, that's what we gravitated towards was how to make operations more efficient. So we just kind of applied that to our bread production. And how can— and we still do that every single day. We're like, how can we make this process way better, way easier for the team, and more efficient, more profitable? We're constantly looking at that. And a big part of that was moving out of the trailer kitchen into a commercial space. Yeah, which is how we ended up in the marketplace in 2019.

C**Carly Bogard** 24:31

I love that. All right, at this time we're going to take a quick break to hear a word from our sponsors. Brew Fountain's voted best beer bar in Ohio. Come visit their award-winning team in downtown Bellefontaine for fresh local craft beer, soups, salads, sandwiches, wine on tap, and handcrafted cocktails. And they're always available to cater your next event with their box lunches and platters. Cheers to Small Nation! Come check out 600 Downtown Pizzeria in downtown Bellefontaine, where they cherish the art of making the most authentic, unique, and world-famous and award-winning pizzas. Their team hand spins each pizza the old-fashioned way and only uses the freshest of ingredients. Come see why they were featured on the Food Network. So can you take me back? Because I don't, I don't think I was part of the team at that point. What did that initial conversation look like checking out the space? And Jason, why did you want someone like them in that space?

J**Jason Duff** 25:21

Well, the iteration of the marketplace, you, we went from Center City Mall and one tenant. And to, to close the, the story, the knife and gun store, I was able to keep him to stay, but we agreed to put him in the basement. And his concern about staying and his safety was that he thought someone would break into the front glass windows and steal his inventory. So when we moved him to the lower level, it gave an opportunity to, to really placemake and dream a little bit of the types of businesses that would be a good fit in the marketplace. And The benefit of that building, it's very prominent. It's got a nice back entrance which faces a large city parking lot. But for many, many years, the colors in the canopy and the— really all the paint on the inside was solid black. And so you felt like you're going into this black box and, you know, businesses, you know, and I'll share in the early days, some of the people would say that's where businesses go to die. And that's not a good thing because as the landlord, like, we Not one—

C**Carly Bogard** 26:28

that's a great rumor to get around.

J**Jason Duff** 26:29

Business is to die there. But here's what it took is we started getting new boutiques. So a new boutique in the front and then a hair salon, you know, the lock shop, and, and now the Undertone on Main. But when you got a salon in there, every hour those chairs would change with different people. The boutique was there, and then new tenants started filling in. Jazzercise was, was always a great anchor on the, the second floor. And what we were listening to, it goes back to what Hannah and Carly were saying, like listening to your customers. And people kept saying, like, wouldn't it be nice if there was a great place to get breakfast or lunch or coffee? And I think seeing what they were doing and getting great traction. And the other thing I appreciated about them is their hustle and drive. Mm-hmm. I'll tell you, when I'm in the building and people know me, I work a lot because I don't have a lot of hobbies. I just work. I can almost guarantee that Carly and Hannah will be in the building on a Saturday, Sunday, the same time. And you develop a brother and sisterhood of people that just their hearts in it, they're dialed in. And I will go to the end of the world to help those people because I know how lonely it is and I know how difficult it is to do. But I think them being willing to pivot and listen to their customers and then me eating their product, it was like, I think this would, would be really great. Now let's just say that part of the iteration of your journey and this is something I give permission for people to do, and I'd love to hear your perspective on it. You launched by having a menu and then you had to pull back from it. When the Rise Bakehouse opened up retail hours and they're also trying to build a retail business while building a wholesale business, you couldn't do it all. Can you speak a little bit to that?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 28:14

Yeah. So there was a, there was a couple things that I can remember happening. The first one was we, we launched and I think we were open Thursday through Saturday. Does that sound right?

C**Carly Bogard** 28:25

That sounds right.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 28:26

Yeah, I think 5 sandwiches on the menu. Yeah, and we had a dream that everybody could build their perfect bagel sandwich for breakfast. So our menu—

J**Jason Duff** 28:35

you want to provide all the options.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 28:37

Our menu was a build your own, and oh my God, I mean, you remember that, right? Okay, so we found out pretty quickly, obviously, that, um, it takes a long time for someone to consider all those options.

J**Jason Duff** 28:51

They get paralyzed. In fact, they just will stay up at your counter and they bright-eyed will look at this while you have a line of people, but they're just stuck here, right?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 29:00

Yeah. And we had a lot of ingredients that we had to explain too, and sauces that, you know, we were really proud of, but they weren't— it wasn't obvious by the name what they were. And people need to know every detail of what's in a sauce. Yeah, they do. Yeah. So, um, so we The second iteration, I guess, to that cafe idea was that we cleaned up the menu and we came out with like, yeah, it was like 5 or 6 sandwiches that were, you know, that we dictated what was going to be on them. And that went really, really well until I got pregnant again. And I was working until I was like going in at 1:30 or 2 in the morning. So, and, you know, it was definitely a choice. We made choices after that to change the structure and the way that our processes worked so that nobody has to work at 1:30 or 2:00 in the morning to get the cafe open. But that's what I was doing at the time. And it wasn't sustainable, obviously, through an entire pregnancy. So we made the decision to close the retail and kind of pursue our wholesale side of the business, which we were doing at the time. I mean, we were doing as soon as we moved into the commercial kitchen, even a little before. And that went really well. But it was probably like you and me. Only you and me. Yeah, it was you and me for years just doing the wholesale. But we had complete control over our schedules, which is really nice when you have small children. It's efficient. There's no weekends. It's profitable. You don't have almost any waste. You can, yeah, make stuff in masses.

C**Carly Bogard** 30:38

Yeah. Wow, that's crazy.

J**Jason Duff** 30:40

And you also started making pizza to support other pizzerias.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 30:45

Ah, yeah, yeah. Yep, we do pizza dough. We still— so I've, uh, Carly will laugh at me about this, but I have this eternal dream of bringing incredible breakfast pizza to Bellefontaine.

C**Carly Bogard** 30:56

Breakfast pizza.

J**Jason Duff** 30:56

I would support that.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 30:57

Breakfast pizza. I'm on board. I love breakfast pizza, and I am a very hard critic, so We will get there someday.

C**Carly Bogard** 31:03

Okay, I love it.

J**Jason Duff** 31:04

Well, if we fast forward to today, um, the Morning Riot— and you really have to come see it at 130 South Main Street in downtown Bellefontaine. It is inside the Main Street Marketplace. Part of the collaboration between our tenants in the marketplace and we as the landlord was visioning up— I didn't want that black box, that history of that black box, to remain. And then also our facade and our canopy was starting to rip. The paint was starting to chip, and truthfully, with all of the other iterations of how downtown Bellefontaine has started to come alive, the marketplace, even though it was done 15 years ago and had some upgrades at that time, it was getting tired. And so we brought the tenants together in the building and did kind of a community town hall listening for feedback. And some of the feedback that came up is that the tile facing the sidewalk, was really dark and everything looked dark. And people felt that with the windows and the tent and the windows, the building felt like it was closed. And so listen to that feedback. The other thing is there were some complaints that the branding of the building, people still would call it the Center City Mall. Um, and there wasn't clear what the marketplace is. So the signage was off. And then because the inside had a lot of shops and also was getting ready soon to have a new cafe, really having signage that would be specific to that. So we worked with architects, we brought in a professional sign company, and we visioned up some renderings. Because as Carly and Hannah were describing their vision, they laid out some renderings that were bold. When I say bold, like colors, like I would never imagine could all work together. But when you get in there, they all work together and it's like fun and neon signs and, you know, gigantic light fixtures that have feathers hanging off of them. I mean, you just go in there and you feel happy when you're in the space. But it would be mistaken if the outside of the building didn't pay some homage to what's going on the inside. So if you go by today, we, the landlord, working with Hannah and Carly and a lot of our tenants made some major investments in new signage. The lower half of the facade is painted this really pretty orange color, which they have that, that same color that carries through in their branding. And then some bright yellow cafe tables. And part of the reasons why I like— we even keep the cafe tables out in the winter. People make fun of me for doing this, but it's like, it is the pop of color. The— there's something psychological. They're like, oh, there's a place to eat inside of there. And then now they've made some major upgrades with the way that people can place orders and get people through the line. Do you want to share, like, when you walk into the space, what are some of the learnings that you've had of how they interact with their menu, they work with your staff for the kind of things that they can order at the MorningRite?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 34:03

Yeah, so we just got a self-ordering kiosk, which is extremely exciting.

J**Jason Duff** 34:08

So it is the first one. In a small, innovative restaurant shop. I've seen them with some of the larger brands, you know, but I have to give you a lot of props with that. And I've taken some pictures to, you know, to share with us because you've done such a nice job with that.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 34:23

Yeah, it's been fantastic. It's extremely easy to use. You can pretty much skip the line on a Saturday if you just need a sandwich or just a coffee order on the kiosk and we can get it out to you. But you also do have the option to go up to the window and talk to our cashier. You can ask all the questions that you need to, kind of look around, look at the menu, take your time. What would you say, do you think the percentage of orders that are placed on the kiosk now, would you say 30 to 50% depending on the day? Yeah, I would say probably on Saturdays we're close to 50%.

J**Jason Duff** 34:56

Wow. Has that improved the productivity since you've implemented it too?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 35:00

Absolutely. Okay. You can feel it in the front. That they have more time to make drinks. Things are running smoother up there. There's also 2 point of sales now. So obviously, we can move more people through in less amount of time, which is fantastic.

J**Jason Duff** 35:13

So to do that, that takes investment. It takes work and programming. Can you share, was it clunky figuring that out? Or was there any fear that you had with that?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 35:26

I'm probably naively just not afraid of a lot of things. I'm very open to trying and failing. And I asked our Toast rep if we could get a kiosk in there. And they're like, well, you know, it's a little bit of money. And they actually were able to get us a unit free of charge if we just started paying for the software, which is like \$40 a month. And I don't know if it gets more expensive. I think it might be the same if we add additional kiosks. Don't quote me on that. But that's extremely affordable when you consider that you're paying someone to stand at the register. Like, that's— it's less than a day of labor easily. So no, it probably took me a day to set up. And I don't know, maybe in it, like, because our POS is already built, all I have to do is switch the things on that I want to show up on the kiosk. And it's very intuitive. I was extremely impressed with the process and very excited now that so many people are using it and prefer to use it.

C**Carly Bogard** 36:28

Why do you think more businesses aren't— like, small businesses aren't using it yet? Just because it's new?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 36:36

I couldn't really answer that. I think that we have a unique setup in town to explore that because of—we're not, you know, we don't hire servers that go and stick with one table. It's really a team group effort to make sure that the bathrooms are clean and the food is cooked properly and going out at the right time and people have their drinks. So I think most of the other restaurants are very much focused on table service. Got it. And it might just be a different landscape. Unique business model.

J**Jason Duff** 37:06

Yeah. You know, the thing that we hear a lot is getting something that you can get within half an hour or less. Because a lot of our sit-down dining restaurants, they're just not set up to do that. And so I think by putting in that new technology, or allowing people to order online, which I know more and more places are doing. Yeah, it reduces the friction point so people can actually leave their desk or leave their office. Or even if you're running a small shop, like, you really don't have time to like close the store and then go get something to eat. So it's like figuring out as many ways to be as convenient as possible, and I think you guys have done a nice job with that.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 37:45

On that note, the next step that we plan to implement after the kiosk is to have a heated pickup rack that is accessible so people don't have to come to the counter to get their pickup order or find it, you know, up on the bar somewhere. Just a very specific, easy transaction. You can place it at your desk at work, and when you get there, it's ready and you grab it and go.

J**Jason Duff** 38:06

Yeah, love that.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 38:07

We're also going to be rolling out curbside pickup this week. So that's very exciting in cold weather.

C**Carly Bogard** 38:13

Yeah, we're literally in the negative.

J**Jason Duff** 38:14

Carly will be doing—

C**Carly Bogard** 38:17

thanks for volunteering.

J**Jason Duff** 38:19

So on that front, your menu items. So let's highlight some of the things that you're most proud of. Maybe what kind of goes into that menu item that you think are really unique to your restaurant.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 38:31

So I'm going to let Carly talk on this. When Carly joined the team, I taught her how to bake bread. But since she's been on, I've really stepped more into an admin role. And when I come back in, She's just teaching me stuff all day. She took our croissant recipe, for example, and now we call her the couche queen.

C**Carly Bogard** 38:51

All right.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 38:52

Which means layers in French.

J**Jason Duff** 38:56

Yes, thanks for clarifying.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 38:59

And she just, I mean, it's definitely so, it's 100% better than it was when I stopped making the croissants. So we use her system now. And when Carly wanted to open the restaurant, She was telling me the types of things she wanted to be on the menu. And I'm like, no, nobody's going to go for that. Nobody in this town is going to want to eat that. And then she made it for me. And I'm like, everybody's going to want to eat this. It was incredible. So I'll let her talk about the dishes. Yeah. So first off, Hannah taught me how to bake bread. I absolutely had no baking experience before that. And it was a job for me. Of course, I wanted to support my sister's dream. And I like to work. So it was something new to learn. But the restaurant has been extremely exciting because we get to incorporate other food now. It's not just bread and pastries. It's meals and food and all the good stuff. Probably my favorite dish would be the avocado toast. Mm. It's great. And everything on the menu, really. Hannah and I sat down and talked about, and it's something that we would eat or we would feed our families.

J**Jason Duff** 40:03

So a lot of it— So can I say, in most towns our size, Avocado toast does not exist. That was a very like Western, you know, the Cali, California, New York. But the surprise is, is avocado, we were learning about all of these health benefits of it. And people that do care about, you know, what goes in their body, where the food is sourced, and wanting to get nutrition. I'm so happy to hear that selling so well because it is a great menu item. You know, that's one of my favorite things to order when I get there. But Thank you for having the courage. And I guess, what would you say for other restaurateurs that are listening, like thinking that same thing? Avocado toast probably will not work in my small town.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 40:43

Um, it's the second or third best-selling item on the menu. It might be second. Well, yeah, I just think that some of these foods that, you know, the majority of people love can just be made cleaner. They just have extra added ingredients that are not good for us. And if we can show people that they still taste the same even with less ingredients, then, you know, can't be a bad thing. And that's what matters to me— whole foods, clean food. Um, yeah, avocado toast. We have a pork banh mi bowl.

J**Jason Duff** 41:12

That's good too.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 41:13

A lot of these things I've probably eaten in Columbus or bigger cities, or, you know, when we're traveling, Michigan. Um, but I make them at home. I mean, that's what— if I'm gonna make myself something to eat, that's what I want. So now we have it at the restaurant and we can share that with other people. And I'm just happy that everybody loves it too.

C**Carly Bogard** 41:31

Yeah, I think people who enjoy the bigger cities, the experiences there, appreciate being able to find something like that in their own small town. And they have enough— if you get enough restaurants doing the same thing, then you have quite the experience in a small town, which is really cool.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 41:46

I think the big key is getting customers to trust you before they step into one of your riskier dishes. Mm-hmm. You know, the most popular dish that we sell is called the Common Man. And it is a basic bagel breakfast sandwich. But a lot of people that have eaten it have had the bagel that we serve the avocado toast on. So now they may just be trying avocado or they may just be adding the pickled vegetables or just one thing, but they know how good the other components are. And I think that removes a little bit of the hesitation. Yeah. We also serve French fries. I just wanted to throw that out there. You know, I have a 14-year-old son. Hannah has 3 kids and We want everybody to be able to enjoy something there. So there's French toast, there's french fries, pretzel bites and queso. There's, there's things that aren't, uh, for foodie people.

J**Jason Duff** 42:35

Yeah. The other thing that I'll comment is I've had a chance to get to know and meet many of your staff members, and you mentioned that when you first started out it was just you guys. What was the process to hire find and retain good people? And now I think you've got at least 6, 7, 8 people that are working in the restaurant. What's been that, that process for you to create a culture that people want to work with you?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 43:04

I think it goes back to, to what we would want as a work culture. And, you know, Hannah and I have worked the same jobs, worked some different jobs, but had a lot of similar not great experiences and We don't want that for somebody else. So very important to us, you know, to care about your employees, to let your employees be able to take care of their children, to be understanding. So I think, I think when you treat people like people, they start caring in return and it's just a give and take. And we've been very lucky. We've had a wonderful staff for many years. Yeah. And that being said, as far as retaining employees, it's also important to remember that everybody has a different path in life. You know, we don't take it personally when anybody quits. We actually try to celebrate that and encourage them in their next phase of life. And we're grateful for our incredible team and every moment that we have with them in our space. But we also know that most of them aren't going to be there for the rest of their lives.

J**Jason Duff** 44:10

Yeah, it's interesting. Yeah, no, go ahead.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 44:13

We've also had multiple employees that start their own business, and we absolutely encourage that. Um, Tori has Wild Oats Gluten-Free Wagon. Uh, Jamie's getting ready to open Always Brewin', the coffee trailer. And yeah, we just want to be encouraging.

J**Jason Duff** 44:29

And I'll just share, I think that's another thing to celebrate is that you're supporting the future entrepreneurs. Could be the younger versions of yourself, like, or people that also have dreams too. That their dreams can coexist within your dream. And I think that's something that we, you know, over the years I've gotten better at too, because in the beginning, like, you— this concept of work family does become like family. But in the reality of it, and I think you say this well, is like, there's a lot of evidence that said these are not your family members, like, and that's okay. It's like they're there to, to, to work and to create, but You do have to create some boundaries with that, and I've had to learn that over my entrepreneurial journey. But I love it, and I do think this is a really good reminder for our listeners, is how you can help people build their dreams within your dream. And, and you, Ethan, I think you're a perfect example too. Like, you know, this idea of creating the podcast, and you are a contractor that, that help us, um, from a creative standpoint make this podcast exist, but you also are helping other people with their podcast and their, you know, marketing and content creation strategies. Like, if we can create these paths and give people the opportunity and one of the things are going to happen, either they're going to be like, oh, I want to go out and do my dream and wow, I love this. I'm so happy I'm building my empire. Or, oh my gosh, that— why did you let me go out on my own? Not for me. Yeah, but you giving people that permission and that space to do that, it's all part of the journey.

C**Carly Bogard** 46:01

Yep. And it's very empowering. I mean, I can speak from personal experience and, you know, you can go and try it out. And if it's not for you, then it's not for you. But yeah, you mentioned family and I want to— this— I want to ask this question kind of before we move on to the next show segment. But the two of you are family sisters and, you know, you've been doing this for a little while now. We know from the podcast and it's no secret to anyone that doing business with family can be difficult. So I'm curious, what is the secret sauce for the two of you to get through those hard times?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 46:29

I don't know that there's any secret. It's just hard. And it's a lot of work. It's a lot of intentional work. Yeah. And the cool— it's kind of like weighing the challenging parts of it with the positive parts. I have a partner that I know will either pick my kids up from school if I'm not going to be able to make it or come get me out of my driveway if I can't get out in the morning. I know that if I'm deathly ill, she's going to step in regardless of how many days she worked that week and take care of the stuff. You don't often have that with any other partner other than family.

C**Carly Bogard** 47:05

Yeah.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 47:06

So that's a really incredible aspect to our relationship. And as far as making decisions together, we try to separate responsibilities as much as possible. You can get overwhelmed with all the decisions that need made if you're always making them together, because then you're not just making a decision, you're debating the correct decision, which can be exhausting and depleting. Ian and I have very opposite personalities. So we usually are on opposite sides of the spectrum when it comes to a lot of things. And again, I've known Hannah for my whole 33 years. And I don't— there's nobody else in the world that I trust more. I know how she makes decisions. I know why she makes decisions. And Yeah, I just— I don't know. I love you too.

C**Carly Bogard** 47:56

Thank you. I appreciate you guys opening up about that. But I'm going to move us on here into, uh, just a fun segment of our show, which is our rapid-fire Q&A. And, uh, these are the hard questions. The first one is, what is your favorite caffeinated beverage of choice? Coffee.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 48:13

Coffee. Coffee.

C**Carly Bogard** 48:15

Sorry, what kind of coffee?

- J** **Jason Duff** 48:16
Anything in it?
- H** **Hannah Wischmeyer** 48:17
Anything?
- C** **Carly Bogard** 48:17
You got to be specific with me. What kind of coffee?
- H** **Hannah Wischmeyer** 48:18
I'm a very black coffee Just black. I do black coffee, also honey cinnamon lattes. I enjoy those.
- C** **Carly Bogard** 48:25
Honey cinnamon, nice. Very nice. Light roast or dark roast?
- H** **Hannah Wischmeyer** 48:28
I like medium.
- C** **Carly Bogard** 48:28
Medium?
- H** **Hannah Wischmeyer** 48:30
I just like deeper roots or supply anything deeper roots.
- C** **Carly Bogard** 48:34
Yeah, good answer. Good answer.
- H** **Hannah Wischmeyer** 48:35
I love it.
- C** **Carly Bogard** 48:36
And then what is your personal favorite item on your menu?
- H** **Hannah Wischmeyer** 48:40
Avocado toast. Woke up feeling dangerous.
- J** **Jason Duff** 48:43
What's that one?
- H** **Hannah Wischmeyer** 48:44
Yeah, that one is— it's on a cheddar and jalapeño bagel. It's a roasted chicken red onion breakfast sandwich with our Riot Sauce, which is spicy, and we use sharp cheddar.

J **Jason Duff** 48:57

Sharp cheddar.

H **Hannah Wischmeyer** 49:01

Yeah, we enjoy that one.

C **Carly Bogard** 49:03

Very cool. Very cool. Should have brought some to share.

J **Jason Duff** 49:06

I thought about it. It's still open.

H **Hannah Wischmeyer** 49:07

We're right across the street.

C **Carly Bogard** 49:09

Next time. Next time. Yeah, I need to get over there. And then last one here is, how do you stay inspired and reignite the passion for what you do?

H **Hannah Wischmeyer** 49:19

For me, I take the time when I'm at home to remember why we're doing it. Again, there's so many great things about, about work and our work-family, but it also allows me to be a mom and allows me to have a work-life balance and do the things that I want outside of work. So, yeah, I think between caring for the employees and the people that we work with, wanting them to succeed as much as we want to succeed. And Hannah and my family, they rely on this. So it's important. Yeah. For me, my personality is very like, ooh, shiny thing. So I need to be developing recipes, specials, planning events, and different parties that we're going to have out there. Hannah keeps us relevant for sure.

J **Jason Duff** 50:10

I love that.

H **Hannah Wischmeyer** 50:11

Decorating. You know, anything, anything that is new that's not repetitive.

J **Jason Duff** 50:15

Yeah. So 2025, big goals as we're heading into, you know, today, uh, it is like, uh, -10 in Belfast. So cold. So we're all, we're all dreaming for spring, but give, get us kind of a preview for, for this next year, some big things that are on your radar and goals and things you're excited about.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 50:32

Yeah, obviously, you know, uh, we just opened a few months ago. We're really excited to see where the spring and summer takes us. We have, we really want to push our online ordering and quick pickups. And we have started to do some catering. Oh, great. Platters and things for businesses. I think we're gonna, we're gonna lighten up on the wholesale a little bit and really focus on the restaurant. But lots of events coming up. We do have lots of events coming up. We have a speed dating one at the end of February if anybody's single. Hey. Yeah, we've got a lot of excitement. We're doing some sourdough baking classes and probably going to add some more bread classes to the summer. But our main focus right now is just dialing everything in, standardizing as much as we can. And I think that'll give us the stability to see if we want to open up another one.

C**Carly Bogard** 51:27

Yeah. Love that. Yeah, I love that head-down mentality. And then just a couple of closing questions here for you. These are questions I ask every guest. And the first one is, what is one professional development resource that was impactful for you along your professional journey? So this could be a book, it could be a podcast, it could be a mentor, um, or any kind of, you know, professional support.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 51:47

Uh, for me, multiple mentors along the way. Um, just people that I've looked up to, people who have even been hard on me and given me that hard constructive criticism. Um, you know, I, I appreciate people who are direct and honest. Yeah. Yeah, books are great. Podcasts are great. I think for us, it's been extremely beneficial being down in the Bellefontaine ecosystem as things are growing here. Our relationship with Jason over the years has been incredibly helpful. We have close relationships with a lot of restaurant owners, and they're honest. If I take them a dish or I ask them to run through the kiosk and tell me what hurts, right? Like, what is not feeling great about that experience? I get 100% honest feedback.

J**Jason Duff** 52:35

Wow. The thing that I'll celebrate about you both, and I think this is an important lesson for all of us, is that, you know, staying humble, um, listening. But just like on you mentioning being willing to accept feedback, that's one step, and it's a really important step. Some people miss that step. The next step, and this is something that I think if you want to come to Pell Fountain and learn from Rise Bakehouse and the Morning Riots, whole journey in Hannah and Carly is their ability to implement. That is not easy to do. And, you know, there are people that are idea people. There are people that have different brains that can articulate and see what some of the problems are. But if you, you know, get stuck and you're, you're, you're, you're not able to implement those changes, then that's another really core piece. And I just think the points that I have shared feedback or, you know, have observed things that you're working on, you kind of have this, this ability to move warp speed to implement it. And I just want to compliment you on that. And I think that will be another one of your cornerstones as you build your business empire of when you look back at this is, this is really how we were able to achieve success. So nice job with that.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 53:46

Thank you. Every time we identify a problem, what's going off in my head for the next several days is how many customers are we losing or disappointing with this issue? So we do try to implement things extremely quickly once we figure out that they're an issue.

C**Carly Bogard** 54:00

Yeah, that's great.

J**Jason Duff** 54:02

Well, thanks for being on the show today. And I'm going to encourage everyone to come to the Morning Riot for breakfast and lunch. And generally, you're open up 6 days a week right now?

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 54:09

We are open Tuesday through Saturday, 7:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Intentions of being open on Sunday in the next couple of weeks.

J**Jason Duff** 54:16

Cool. Great goals.

C**Carly Bogard** 54:17

Perfect.

H**Hannah Wischmeyer** 54:18

Thanks, guys. Thanks for having us. Thank you.

E**Ethan DeLeon** 54:20

Thanks for tuning in on this episode of the Small Nation Podcast.

E**Ethan DeLeon** 54:22

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