

COMMUNITY

Chef Space Alumni SissyCakes Bake the ‘Most Perfect Cake in the World’ says UK Football Coach Will Stein

Article and photos re-printed with permission from Community Ventures / www.cuky.org

It was September 2025 and Will Stein, then the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach for the University of Oregon Ducks, was gearing up for the Oregon-Oklahoma State game.

The night before, Stein attended a pre-game party where CBS sports commentator Brad Nessler was also a guest. As any true southerner knows, it is bad form to show up at a function empty-handed, so Stein came bearing a tasty treat from “back home” in Kentucky.

Stein’s mother Debbie, who owns and operates popular Louisville bakery SissyCakes with her sister Blakey Martin, had brought along their signature Orange Juice Cake on her trip out west for the game.

Coach Stein proudly shared the delicacy at the get-together, and to say that Nessler was impressed would be an understatement.

Stein and Nessler produced an impromptu video which Stein immediately forwarded to his mom and aunt.

On the recording, Nessler shares “Hey Debbie and Blakey—I just ate your bundt cake. It’s the best thing I have ever tasted dessert-wise—maybe even food-wise altogether—in my life!”

The next day—during the telecast of the game, Nessler was still singing SissyCakes’ praises to a national audience.

Blakey remembers: “CBS Sports asked permission to mention us during the broadcast, and we agreed. It was a nationally televised game, and they showed a picture of us. They showed a picture of our website.

“I was at home in Louisville watching the game at my house with my family, and Debbie was at the actual game.”

Debbie laughs, “All of a sudden, our watches and our phones began buzzing, buzzing, buzzing. Order after order came pouring in so fast, just from that one mention.”

For SissyCakes—a small family business—it was a game-changing moment that provided both clarity and, undeniably, a bit of stress as well.

Three months later in December when it was announced that Will Stein would be the new head football coach at the University of Kentucky, the accompanying media attention once again brought the SissyCakes name to the forefront.

“We got to work the morning Will’s hiring announcement was made to find news cameras as well as KSR—Kentucky Sports Radio—at our shop,” Blakey recalls. “They came in and did a live taste test. It was so out of the blue.”

As response grew and hundreds of orders poured in from around the country, the sisters came to the proverbial fork in the road. It was time to think long and hard about the best path forward for their burgeoning business.

The Sweet Story That Began with Family and Facebook

Long before SissyCakes Bakery was causing such a stir, there were just two close-knit sisters—Blakey Nutt Martin and Debbie Nutt Stein—who loved to bake for friends and family. Their whole lives, Blakey and Debbie have referred to each other as “Sis,” and a very young Will, perhaps then age five, took to asking for a “Sissy” cake when he wanted a sweet treat.

The name stuck, and what started as a beloved family recipe for an orange juice cake slowly gained a following when the sisters began taking holiday orders through Facebook. In just a few weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas they sold thousands of dollars’ worth of cakes and realized their idea had real potential.

Still, like many Kentucky entrepreneurs, family responsibilities and busy schedules necessitated that the business simmer



along on the back burner for the time being. That is, until a major opportunity presented itself.

When Louisville-based Paul’s Fruit Market sampled a SissyCake and expressed interest in carrying the desserts, there was one non-negotiable requirement: they had to be produced in a certified commercial kitchen.

That stipulation was the turning point that pushed the sisters to take the next step. And like many small business owners, although they had passion and a great product, they needed guidance, resources, and small business funding to take SissyCakes to the next level.

Finding Chef Space: Business Assistance Tailor-Made for Food Entrepreneurs

When the sisters placed a call to Tom Murro, president of Community Ventures’ Chef Space, an innovative kitchen incubator program located in Louisville’s Russell neighborhood, they gained access to more than commercial kitchen facilities. They also found both expert business training and funding opportunities.

Of their first meeting back in 2022, Blakey said: “We took a tour with Tom and he was just delightful. His mentorship and guidance through the process was invaluable because we didn’t know how to get from point A to point B. We didn’t

know how to use commercial equipment, or all the health department rules, and Tom helped us with all of that.”

By utilizing Chef Spaces’ commercial kitchen to bake their cakes, SissyCakes was able to immediately begin to fulfill orders for Paul’s Fruit Market as well as to pursue other wholesale opportunities.

After spending more than a year building the business through Chef Space, the sisters felt ready to move out into their own brick-and-mortar location. To make that move, they worked with a Community Ventures Business Development Specialist, who helped them navigate the financing process and better understand their options for small business loans in Kentucky.

“When it came time to grow even further, Community Ventures made the funding process painless,” Debbie remembers. “They were there every step of the way, answered all of our questions, and made us feel confident about moving forward.”

With the funding support, SissyCakes was able to purchase commercial bakery equipment and take the next step toward operating independently.

In addition to funding, the sisters benefited from business education and technical assistance throughout the process.



The focus was not only on securing capital but also on helping them understand the best steps to take to ensure strong, sustainable growth.

As Kentucky’s leading micro-lender and a trusted source for loan guidance across the Commonwealth, Community Ventures works with entrepreneurs across the state to explore financing options and business resources that fit their unique needs and goals, enabling them to move forward with confidence.

With their own commercial equipment and a dedicated space close to both of their homes in Louisville’s St. Matthews neighborhood, the sisters were able to continue expanding SissyCakes’ operations and serving more customers—including walk-ins—as well as shipping orders all across the country.

Experience and Steady Growth Lead to a Fork in the Road

It has been five years since a wholesaling opportunity pushed the sisters out of their comfort zones and their homes and into a commercial kitchen space. Now the SissyCakes co-owners, like so many entrepreneurs before them, are faced with making the next best moves for both their business model and for themselves personally.

For Blakey and Debbie, the

first move has been to pull back from wholesale orders to focus on retail sales.

“We were so grateful and very pleased that Paul’s Fruit Market gave us our start. They are a huge market here in Louisville, with four very reputable stores,” Debbie explained. We’ve shopped there our entire lives, as did our parents. We were extremely honored that they wanted to carry our cakes.

“But all along, SissyCakes has been growing organically via word of mouth and social media. We are getting large corporate orders and shipping nationwide—I think we have now shipped to all 50 states. We were on an upward trajectory and profits were strong, even before all of the attention that came our way because of Will’s support and his recent hiring—that has been icing on the cake.”

Blakey continued, “We started this business because it truly brings us joy to see the joy our cakes bring to others. And a big part of the joy for us is being able to connect directly to our customers.

“There came a point that we were spending so much time fulfilling wholesale orders that we had no time at all to do things like pop-ups or events or even greeting our walk-in cus-

tomers—things we loved that brought us face-to-face with the people that were buying our desserts.”

For those reasons, and because it is still important for the sisters to be able to carve out quality time for family, in December of 2025 they made the tough decision to take SissyCakes in a retail-only direction.

Today, the sisters are thrilled to greet their loyal customers as they show up in person at 102 Fairfax Ave. in St. Matthews. For others further away, a SissyCake craving can be satisfied by placing an order online at www.sissycakes.com or by calling (502) 632-1277.

The SissyCakes story reflects a nearly universal reality: While the entrepreneurial journey may begin with a simple idea or a creative spark, turning those into a successful, sustainable business requires patience, persistence, a willingness to learn and adapt, and access to the right resources at the right time.

As for Coach Stein, he will no doubt remain a SissyCakes fan for life. “I am so proud of my mom and my aunt for their hard work growing SissyCakes. The Orange Juice Cake really is the most perfect cake in the world!”

4245 Carpenter Road, Carlisle, KY 40311

OPEN HOUSE

Sunday October 18, 2026 - 1pm-3pm

Freshly painted, move-in ready home features three bedrooms, and two baths that have been recently updated. The spacious family room, complete with a fireplace, creates an inviting space ideal for entertaining family and guests or you can entertain in the sunroom. Partially fenced backyard with an above-ground pool, back deck and an extra building for storing your mower and gardening tools.

Trish Jenkins

859-588-5590

Palmer Hampton Realty

Doug Hampton-Broker

ABSOLUTE AUCTION

126 Leer St., Millersburg, KY 40348

ON-SITE

Saturday, October 17, 2026 @ 1:00pm

Charming and affordable opportunity in the heart of Millersburg, KY being offered at ***ABSOLUTE AUCTION On-Site, October 17, 2026 @ 1:00pm. EST*** This cozy two bedroom, one full bath home is situated on a spacious double lot conveniently located in downtown Millersburg. Whether you're looking for a starter home, rental investment, or a manageable place to call your own, this property offers great potential. NO Buyer's Premium, 5% Earnest Money Deposit due Day of Sale, 45 Day Closing, Cash or Conventional Buyers Only, Cash Buyers Need Proof of Funds (ie Most recent bank statement, proof of funds letter, etc.), Conventional Buyers Need Pre Approval Letter, NO Contingencies - Financial (Appraisal) or Otherwise, Property Sold "As Is, Where Is" and with ALL Faults, No Warranties - Expressed, Implied or Otherwise, Buyer(s) to Verify ALL Aspects of the Property and Suitability of the Property for Themselves, Buyer(s) agree to hold harmless and release Seller(s), Auctioneer(s), Broker(s), Agent(s), etal completely and totally from liability or responsibility with respect to any aspect of the property and the purchase thereof, Auction Conducted by Sparks Auction Co., LLC/David C. Sparks, Principal Auctioneer in Coordination with The Real Estate

REAL ESTATE COMPANY

Kim Caywood, Principal Broker
License # 266876
David C. Sparks, Realtor
License # 220948

Company of KY, LLC/Kim Caywood, Principal Broker & David C. Sparks, Realtor. Any announcements made day of sale take precedence over any and all advertising. For more information call Principal Auctioneer David C. Sparks at 859-473-0881.

Sparks Auction Co., LLC

David C. Sparks, Principal Auctioneer
License # 256500

BLACK WALNUT HARVEST

Oct. 1 - Nov. 16

STARTING PRICE:

\$14

PER

100

POUNDS

(AFTER HULLING)

Pick up freshly fallen black walnuts and bring them to:

LOCATION 4600 Burris Rd. Carlisle, Ky.

PHONE 859-405-5615

DAYS/HOURS OF OPERATION Mon.- Fri. 8:00-5:30

Sat. 8:00-3:00 Closed Sun.

#100.00 Bonus For Whoever Brings The Most

HAMMONS

PRODUCTS COMPANY

“THE BLACK WALNUT PEOPLE”

Walnuts For The Year.

#50.00 For Second place.

black-walnuts.com

LEGAL NOTICE

SPECIAL MASTER COMMISSIONER'S SALE

The Special Master Commissioner of the Nicholas Circuit Court will sell at public auction to the highest and best bidder(s) at the Nicholas County Justice Center, in Carlisle, Kentucky, on Thursday, October 22, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., the following property listed below:

1. Pursuant to a Judgment and Order of Sale entered by the Nicholas Circuit Court on September 21, 2026, in Civil Action No. 26-CI-00042 styled **NewRez LLC, Plaintiff, vs. Garrett Austin Campbell and Kelley Campbell, Defendants:**
352 West Main Street, Carlisle, KY 40311
Parcel ID# C03-03-016.00
See Deed Book 146, Page 470.

The property is being sold to produce a sum sufficient to satisfy the judgments and liens as follows: (a) The costs of this action, including the Special Master Commissioner's fee, appraiser's fee and advertising costs; (b) Judgment for NewRez LLC, Plaintiff, in the amount of \$147,506.51, plus interest at the rate of 3.25% per annum from April 30, 2026 until paid, (c) Real estate taxes, plus interest and penalties, if any, for taxes assessed for the year 2025 and previous years. (d) Plaintiff Court costs and attorney fees.

Terms for Plaintiff: Hon. Blake E. Embry

Terms of Sale:

All properties shall be sold upon the following terms and conditions unless otherwise noted: (1) The property shall be sold free and clear of all liens and claims of the parties to this action; (2) The purchaser shall be required to pay the sum of 10% of the purchase price in cash, certified funds or by other immediately verifiable collectable medium of exchange acceptable to the Commissioner, on the day of sale to apply on the purchase price; (3) The balance of the purchase price shall be due and payable within thirty (30) days after the day of sale; (4) The purchaser shall be required to execute a bond with good and sufficient surety thereon as approved by the Commissioner to secure the unpaid portion of the purchase price, the bond to bear interest at the rate the judgment bears, from the day of sale until paid, the bond to have the same force and effect as a judgment and shall remain a lien on the property as additional security until the purchase price is paid in full; (5) The purchaser shall have the privilege of paying all or any part of the purchase price or paying the bond before maturity by paying the balance of the principal together with all accrued interest thereon until the date of payment; (6) The purchaser shall obtain possession of the property upon confirmation of the sale by the Court and payment of the purchase price in full; (7) All ad valorem taxes on the property for calendar year 2026 and all subsequent years shall be assumed and paid by the purchaser. All real property taxes due and owing to Nicholas County or the City of Carlisle, if applicable, for 2025 and prior years will be paid from the proceeds of sale. (8) The property shall be sold subject to any assessment for public improvements levied against the property and subject to all rules and regulations enforced by the Nicholas County Planning and Zoning Commission, all applicable health and safety regulations, all restrictions and easements thereon appearing of record in the Nicholas County Court Clerk's Office, governmental laws and regulations affecting the property, and shall be subject to any unrecorded easements, discrepancies or conflicts in boundary lines, shortage in area and encroachments, if any there be, which an accurate and complete survey or an inspection of the property would disclose; (9) The purchaser shall bear the risk of loss on the improvements on the property and the risk of loss shall pass to the purchaser as of the day and time of sale; (10) The property shall be sold with any improvements thereon "as is"; and (11) The property shall be sold subject to such right of redemption as may exist in favor of the United States of America pursuant to 28 USC Section 2410, and the right of redemption of the Defendants, if applicable, and any rights or requirements imposed by Civil Rule 4.11, if applicable.

All bidders will be prepared to comply with these terms.

Hon. John Lair
Special Master Commissioner
Nicholas Circuit Court

Published in the Carlisle Mercury on 10.07 & 10.14 of 2026