

## Baking brothers find sweet success with cookies

BY PAM DAILEY, Staff writer



**MORE THAN A BAKER'S DOZEN** — 13-year-old David Beiler unloads a batch of his 'awesome' cookies at his Millmont home. David and younger brother Sam started selling the cookies from a stand in their front yard, and have enlisted the help of their parents to meet demand for their home-baked goods.  
Photo by Pam Dailey/Standard Journal.

**MILLMONT** — For David and Sam Beiler, success is truly sweet — not to mention chewy and perfectly balanced with just the right amount of chocolate chips.

David, 13, and Sam, 10, are purveyors of what some might call the finest cookies along Route 45. They're also the force behind David's Awesome Cookies, serving at buyers, bakers and sellers.

The business began in earnest one winter afternoon when David was bored and decided to bake a batch of peanut butter blossoms. He'd been given the recipe in a family consumer sciences class at school. At the time, he wasn't the experienced baker he is now.

In fact, no one in the family did much baking, but David forged on. He scoured the cupboards for substitutions — Splenda for sugar, reduced-fat peanut butter in place of the full-fat version.

Those initial trays of cookies were ... edible, but certainly not up to David's standards. A few days later he and his dad went shopping for the proper ingredients, baked a new batch and voila. Soon the family had more cookies than they could possibly eat.

"As the days wore on, we kept baking a lot more cookies," David said.

Sam said, "We finally decided to start a business because we had so many (cookies) we didn't know what to do with them."

The boys set up a stand in front of their home along Route 45, and David's Awesome Cookies was born.

Their parents, Sam Sr. and Sylvia, were skeptical, but intrigued. Dad said he was just glad to get rid of the cookies.

David learned quickly that a good product practically sells itself.

"According to most customers, they found it too tempting, and they had to stop again," he said.

Their first large order — six dozen — came one afternoon from a woman who just happened to be driving by when she spotted their sign. Another customer returned 10 minutes later to purchase more cookies.

David's Awesome Cookies turned out to be more of a family venture as orders poured in. When the school year began, Mom and Dad were forced to don their oven mitts to keep up with demand.

"We got ourselves into trouble, especially after school started," Sam Sr. said.

Both parents work full time, and the boys spend their days at school. Needless to say, there's rarely an evening when the smell of just-baked cookies doesn't waft from the Beilers' kitchen.

Sam Sr. and Sylvia are especially pleased with the brothers' resolve in this business venture.

At age 3 David was diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome, a high functioning form of autism. He's been fortunate to benefit from early intervention, a strong education system and support from younger brother Sam.

Sam Sr. said the boys learned an important business lesson after the family began shopping for ingredients in bulk. David got a glimpse of the bill, and suddenly his cookies began to shrink. Dad reminded him to consider things from a customer's point of view, and the cookies returned to their normal size.

Even now, most of the profit goes back into purchasing flour and eggs and chocolate chips and everything else required to bake 60 to 70 dozen cookies each week. The boys aren't worried though. Word of mouth has been by far the best form of advertisement, and they're convinced anyone who tries David's Awesome Cookies will have something good to say.

The family agreed David is the most particular — after all, it's his name customers recall when they run out of cookies.

The young entrepreneur shrugged off any notion that there's such a thing as too meticulous.

"Then again, you have to be picky," he maintains.

Now the family gathers for planning meetings Sunday nights to discuss where their business is headed. Nothing's definite, but they're throwing around the idea of getting a building to house the operation or perhaps hiring someone to take on some baking duties.

David and Sam are optimistic, and say they're in it for the long haul. "If we get pretty good at expanding this business we can pass it on," David said.

Their parents have been supportive since the boys sold their first cookie, but also realistic — they still want their sons to have time to be kids.

"We're just trying to find our way," Sam Sr. said.

You might say David's entrepreneurial spirit is inherited. The family is related to Auntie Anne's founder Ann Beiler, who started her nationally known business out of her kitchen.

"It's easy to tell they're related by the taste," Sam observed. "The cookies are good and the pretzels are good.

"Even if he tried, (David) couldn't make bad cookies."

David's Awesome Cookies come in nine varieties, and can be ordered in advance at [www.davids-awesome-cookies.com](http://www.davids-awesome-cookies.com) or purchased at their roadside stand along Route 45 about three miles west of Mifflinburg. The boys usually set up shop Friday after school and Saturday and Sunday mornings. Prices range from \$3 to \$4 a dozen.

If you're feeling indecisive, Sam suggests the chocolate chip or snicker doodle varieties. David favors the molasses cookies — his grandmothers recipe, of course.

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