

'David's Awesome Cookies'



Chris Sciacca/The Daily Item



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Above, David Beiler poses in his kitchen where he does all of the baking for his "David's Awesome Cookies" cookie stand. Right, David, seated, and his brother, Sam, pose outside next to their Mifflinburg cookie stand.

13-year-old turns baking hobby into business

By Rob Scott
The Daily Item

MIFFLINBURG — Stationed right along Route 45 a few miles outside Mifflinburg, 13-year-old David Beiler has been peddling his own homemade brand of cookies since May.

He's sold them to friends and neighbors, some Amish men who passed by on a wagon train, even a group of bikers on their way to San Francisco.

Aided by a cookie cookbook loaded with 1,001 recipes and using his younger brother, Sam, as taste tester, David has expanded his line to eight flavors, including peanut butter, snickerdoodles, oatmeal raisin, molasses and chocolate chip, their best-seller.

It started on a Sunday, in late winter, when David got bored and decided to bake a batch of peanut butter cookies at home. He had been baking the cookies in his Family Consumer Science class at Mifflinburg Middle School.

He started to make them more and more often, until it got to the point where "we couldn't eat them all," said his mother, Sylvia. "So we started taking them to work."

Pretty soon, this casual hobby evolved into a full-fledged business and "David's Awesome Cookies" was born.

With a small stand set up alongside the highway, David and Sam sold some 18-20 dozen cookies on their first day of business on Memorial Day.

Word-of-mouth slowly spread and they now sell up to 35 dozen a week, some through special order and others through walk-up business at the stand, which is only open Fridays and Saturdays.

"I was very skeptical at first," said Mrs. Beiler. "I was like, 'Who's gonna stop at a roadside stand?'"

But they stopped. Many of them more than once. Sometimes more than once a day.

"A guy came by with his wife the other day to buy one dozen," said Sam. "They went down the road and about 15 minutes later they came back and bought another dozen. They didn't want to wait till the next day."

"I don't know if I was surprised (at their success)," said

Mrs. Beiler. "Both of them are straight-A students. But their stick-to-itiveness has been impressive."

Their father, Sam Sr., chalks their success up to the quality of the product.

"Some of it is repeat business. People know they're good cookies," he said. "David's very particular."

While Sam Jr. fills in as the business's public relations department, David is the reclusive genius, toiling away in the kitchen — sometimes in the wee hours of the morning — in pursuit of the perfect cookie.

To his parents, David's success as an entrepreneur is all the more impressive because

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he was diagnosed at age 3 with Asperger's Syndrome, a high-functioning form of autism.

David's interest in cooking started at an early age. He remembers baking English muffin pizzas in 6th grade, but eventually he lost interest.

"He didn't pick up the baking thing from either of his parents," Mr. Beiler said.

At the start, the family didn't have many of the ingredients David needed to make the cookies. They had to improvise from time to time, Mrs. Beiler said, using Splenda in place of sugar on one occasion.

"Those cookies weren't as good," David said.

Now Mr. and Mrs. Beiler buy the ingredients and David and Sam Jr. pay them back with the profits from the business. What they don't spend on ingredients gets set aside for college.

David has given some thought to his future. Some sort of culinary school is a possibility, he said. But right now he's focused on the business.

With school starting up, the boys plan to trim the hours back to just Saturdays. They hope to get some of the traffic from Penn State football games and are in the process of expanding their Web site.

Mr. Beiler came up with the business's name, plugging in



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This sign lures travelers driving along Route 45 between Mifflinburg and Hartleton.

the "awesome" after discovering there was already a "David's Cookies" in New York.

The original David's Cookies has expanded from a single store in Manhattan to what its Web site described as a "semi-international franchise with over 250 cookie shops in many different countries."

Could the future hold similar success for David's Awesome Cookies? Mr. Beiler seems to think so.

"The possibilities are endless. That's something I could envision in the future," he said. "But right now we want the boys to have time to be kids."

David's cookies are \$3 a

dozen. Orders can be placed online at www.davids-awesome-cookies.com or by dropping by the stand along Route 45.

■ E-mail comments to rscott@dailyitem.com.