

Announcer: Welcome to Hancock Conversations, an Allan Hancock College podcast. Join President Dr. Kevin G. Walthers and members of the Hancock community, as they explore the stories behind the people and places that make Allan Hancock College the unique hub for learning that it is today. You're sure to learn something new and even have a little fun along the way.

Kevin Walthers: Hi and welcome to Hancock Conversations, the podcast about all things Allan Hancock College. I'm Kevin Walthers, the Superintendent/President at Allan Hancock College, and today we're speaking to Veronica Van Horn, the owner of V's Sweet Treats. And she is a graduate of our culinary program, who has moved on now to operate her own business. So Veronica, welcome.

Veronica Van Horn: Thank you.

KW: So Veronica, tell us a little bit about what V's Sweet Treats are. You're a cottage bakery, and tell us how that works.

VVH: Yeah, so I have a cottage permit, so I am able to operate out of my home. So you just apply for a permit, and then they come in, inspect it and make sure that you have a Food Handler's card. And then I do all custom work, so I'm not like a typical bakery that you can walk into and just grab stuff off the shelf. Everything has to be ordered in advance, everything that I do is made from scratch. I don't do any box mix. And I do cakes, cookies, bread, pastries, cream puffs, pies, you name it, I can probably do it.

KW: So, when you're saying it's a custom order, if I wanted pies for this weekend, I just call you up and say I need some pies?

VVH: As long as I'm available then yes, I can make them.

KW: Alright. That sounds great.

VVH: Usually, I try to tell everybody to place an order at least two weeks in advance, if not further in advance, because I do get booked up pretty easy.

KW: Okay. What kind of clients do you normally have? Are you working for restaurants, or are you doing family gatherings? Tell us who your clientele might be.

VVH: Mainly it's all family gatherings. I don't have a Class B permit, so that would be so I could retail sale out to a coffee shop or to restaurants, or anything like that. So everything I have to do is basically to the customer, they can't resell it, that's against the permit. So, basically everybody comes in, they just send me a message or they call me up and tell me what they want to do, what they want their order to look like, and I'll give them a quote. And if they approve the quote, then we'll go forward with making the order.

KW: Great. So you graduated from our program in 2015, and give us a little sense of what it was like being in that program.

VVH: It was great. I love the program. When I first started the program, I thought I was going to be starting a catering company, that's what my goal was. And when I took the cake decorating classes, it was a challenge. And when I see a challenge I want to conquer it. So I kept playing around and fighting with it, asking friends that I knew had birthdays coming up, 'Can I do your cake?' because I need to practice. And I fell in love with it, and I decided this is my goal right now, to go this route, instead of the catering.

KW: So when we're watching these shows, the great cake decorating contests and things like that, you ever thought about doing some of that kind of competition baking?

VVH: I've been encouraged to do that by many people, but I'm a very shy person, like talking over the phone is easy, but being recorded, I can't do that. I don't want people to see me. I like to be behind the scenes.

KW: So tell us a little bit about your family. What kind of family do you have here?

VVH: I live with my two sons, they are 13 and 14, and my younger sister, she's 35. We share a home together. And then my friends live like three minutes away from our house and we're a very close knit family. Like especially right now during the holiday season, my mom will come over and help me make pies, because that's such a big demand. So basically I learned everything from her.

KW: Wait, everything from her? What about what you learned at Hancock?

VVH: [Laughter.] Yeah, but you know, like the baking pies, like the recipes and everything. I learned all of the other stuff from Hancock, like the piping, and you know, measuring out things and pricing, which is good because before when I was just like making for friends, I wasn't charging right at all. So Hancock did help me with that.

KW: So those two boys ended up being kind of the sous chef for you, from time to time?

VVH: My youngest does. He is in eighth grade this year, so last year he was in home economics, and he loved it. So especially when the pandemic first hit, we would cook a lot together. And I would send videos or pictures to his teacher. And he enjoys it. As for the older, he likes helping me, but not so much anymore, he'd rather play video games.

KW: Gotcha, gotcha. So, have you, have you seen a change in your business during the pandemic? How is that?

VVH: Oh, dramatically. When the pandemic hit, all of my orders canceled at once.

KW: Oh, no.

VVH: And luckily I had a part time job that ended up turning into a full time job, because like right now business is so slow. The parties aren't very big, they're very small. A cake would be like an eight-inch cake, so that's not much money. So hopefully it will bounce back up once we start opening some more, but yeah, it was really scary for a while there.

KW: Well, we're gonna hope for the best for you, and we're going to help get out a little bit of word out about Hancock alumnus business on the V's Sweet Treats, I think. Are you on social media?

VVH: Yes, I'm on Facebook and Instagram.

KW: What is that Instagram link?

VVH: It's under Veronica Van Horn.

KW: So just go to Instagram, and look up Veronica Van Horn and be able to find it.

VVH: And you'll see nothing but cake.

KW: So, you're nothing but cakes. Are you doing the Bundt cakes?

VVH: I don't really do too many Bundt cakes, I do a lot of frosted cakes. Like right now, of course Fortnite is very popular, so I do so many different Fortnite cakes.

KW: Great. Alright. Well, good. Is there anything else you wanted to share with us about your time at Hancock?

VVH: Hancock was great, I loved it. I've gone to a couple different community colleges, and I felt I learned the most at Hancock. The teachers were very knowledgeable, and very patient with us. They helped us when we had struggles. Okay, I actually miss it, I wish I could go back. I'm over credit.

KW: Well, Veronica we're grateful that you joined us today and we're excited by your business and we're going to do a little bit to help promote it. It's V's Sweet Treats, and if you want to find out more about it, you can go to Instagram and look up Veronica Van Horn, you'll see her business there, and you can order your own custom cakes for the holidays coming up. And we thank you for joining us. And for now we'll say this has been Hancock Conversations, the podcast for all things Allan Hancock College. See you soon.