

A SLICE OF THE GOOD LIFE.

NORTH CAROLINA

Winterville

Brock's Farm
POPULAR PICK

BBQ

Wood Fired
Whole Hog

**WHO'S
BAD**

Tribute is a thriller

PCC

Campus
Cornerstone

GWENDY'S GOODIES

love in every bite

A stay-at-home mom became inspired and encouraged by those around her to open her own business.

Gwen Yiznitsky is the mother of seven children. She was fortunate enough to be blessed with her husband, George, who provided for the family and afforded her the opportunity to home-school her children until they reached high school, Yiznitsky said.

Yiznitsky, who has enjoyed baking since she was a child and is self taught, would often bake goodies for her children's teachers, coaches, teams and the office staff to express her appreciation to them for caring for her children.

"I was always encouraged to sell my cookies, but at the time, I wasn't interested," Yiznitsky said. "I bake out of an act of love and thought turning it into a business might take the love away from it."

Her thought process started to change in December 2014 though. Her daughter, Grace, was raising money to attend a mission trip in Thailand and her mother's baked goods were key to jumpstart the fundraiser.

Yiznitsky started baking cookies in October 2014, and by Dec. 15, 2014 she had filled nearly three freezers full to sell the cookies by the pound.

"We sold 200 pounds of cookies in one day," Yiznitsky said with a smile.

Yiznitsky opened her home for the sale.

"It was so much fun to have people in my home. I enjoyed the hospitality. The whole experience was fun and I started thinking, 'Maybe going into business will work,'" she said.

By February 2015, Yiznitsky had teamed up with We Girls Cakes, a mother and daughters business that specialized in homemade cake production.

"They were busy producing cakes and cupcakes and couldn't fill their bakery case," Yiznitsky said.

That is where Gwendy's Goodies came into play. She dabbled in Valentine's Day sugar cookies, creating a box with a heart on it for delivery purposes, and gradually got her foot in the door at We Girls Cakes.



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— Gwen Yiznitsky

"It planted a seed that maybe I could join their team," Yiznitsky said.

We Girls Cakes and Gwendy's Goodies entered into a joint business plan to operate as separate businesses, but share the overhead costs. Gwendy's Goodies, which opened April 1, focused on cookies and muffins.



"It was less intimidating that way for sure," Yiznitsky said.

Before she opened for business though, Yiznitsky needed a company logo. Keeping the heart created for the delivery boxes, Yiznitsky added the motto: Love in Every Bite.

"I use care and love in everything I bake. That is what motivates me. Every cookie I make is with love and baking is how I show love to people," she said.

The joint venture continued until Nov. 15 when We Girls Cakes hung up their baker's hats and opted to open a cake supply shop next door to Gwendy's Goodies.

"I am now doing cakes, too. It has been quite a journey," Yiznitsky admits. "I went from being a stay-at-home-mom to owner of a business that has transformed quite rapidly."

Thankfully, Yiznitsky is a seasoned cake baker. She has a contracted cake decorator, Mallory Bosse, and relies heavily on support from her family.

"Otherwise, it's a one-woman show," she said with a smile. "It is a blessing to

have my children at the bakery with me. There is no way I could do this without them."

Working full-time versus being a full-time mother is "very different," Yiznitsky admits.

"My household is not as clean and organized as it once was and there are not as many home-cooked meals, but I love working side-by-side with my children and that they have access to me and know that I'm always available to them — for that I am thankful."

Her oldest daughter, Julia, is following in her mother's footsteps. Working at Campbell University, Julia often bakes goodies for the college's staff and professors. Yiznitsky's son, Josh, does not necessarily love to bake, but definitely has a passion for cooking.

"He would always bring home recipes from college and be like, 'Mom, we are going to try this,'" Yiznitsky said.

Her high school-aged children, Grace and Katie, are regulars at Gwendy's.

"They work so hard for me. Grace really enjoys decorating and Katie likes to bake and decorate, but she is my event planner," Yiznitsky said.

Gwendy's Goodies hosts a story hour at 10 a.m. Fridays featuring a different book each week, face painting and a themed sugar cookie that ties into the story.

"I love kids, and Friday is my favorite day," Yiznitsky said, explaining her bakery is child-friendly with a children's area that features a chalk table.

Lining the front counter are picture frames used to display customers' art.

"Each child knows that they have one



ANGELA HARNE | THE TIMES-LEADER



Sugar cookies line the shelves at Gwendy's Goodies. The menu features Kathy's cupcake, a chocolate cupcake with peppermint frosting named in honor of owner Gwen Yiznitsky's sister.





Lucy Watson, 6, of Greenville signs her name to her latest piece of art on display at the counter of Gwendy's Goodies. The bakery is child-friendly with a play area, chalk table and art corner. The shop hosts story hour weekly and a monthly Family Night.

frame that is theirs that they can change out their picture. When children come here, I want them to feel like they are going to grandma's," Yiznitsky said.

The bakery also holds a Family Night at 7 p.m. the second Friday of each month featuring music, face painting, balloons and a theme. In December, families made gingerbread houses.

Gwendy's is also an ideal location to hold a party, from a baby shower to a birthday to an any occasion celebration. Parties include cookie, cake or cupcake decorating and games.

"It is all-inclusive. Mom, dad and child just have to show up," Yiznitsky said.

All of Gwendy's Goodies are baked on-site, from scratch by Yiznitsky. Her top selling cookies are classic favorites, chocolate chip, chocolate chip pecan, M&Ms and oatmeal cookies.

"People never get tired of chocolate chip cookies," she said.

Her bakery case always includes those four staple cookies, along with yellow and chocolate cake cupcakes topped with butter cream frosting.

Her other selections vary by the season, Yiznitsky explained. The winter months feature a Boston crème cupcake and a cupcake named for her sister, Kathy's cupcake, which is a chocolate cake cupcake topped with pink peppermint frosting and a peppermint sucker in the middle.

While she admits she loves a sticky bun, Yiznitsky does not have a favorite menu item.

"Custom orders are fun, and celebrating occasions. I just completed an order for an adoption party. Loving children, I was excited to be part of the celebration," she said with a smile.

She takes pride in designing college-themed cookies to celebrate graduations, too.

"I love my kids so much and I love to help another mom love their kids and make an event special," Yiznitsky said.

Yiznitsky is thrilled to be operating her business in Ayden.

"I have enjoyed becoming part of a small town. Ayden is on the cusp of revitalizing and to be part of it and offer the community something — it's growth," she said.

The bakery will ship cookies anywhere in the United States and overseas to military members. All orders are customized per the consumer's request.

Gwendy's Goodies, 514 Second St., Ayden, is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and from 8 a.m. to noon Saturdays. For more information or to place an order, call 252-414-8716 or visit gwendysgoodies.com.

COURTESY OF GWENDY'S GOODIES



Gwen Yiznitsky (center, back) is thankful for her husband, George, and their seven children, Julia, 25, George, 23, Josh, 21, Matthew, 19, Grace, 17, Katie, 15, and Jedi, 13, who have supported her journey from stay-at-home mom to full-time baker and business owner.

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— Gwen Yiznitsky