

# LOAFING AROUND

Bread-baking business a true family affair



Sister-brother-wife team (from left) Wendy, Geoff and Katie Melkonian started Breadwinner last Thanksgiving.

BY SUZANNE WRIGHT

**T**he family that bakes together ... stays together! Breadwinner consists of husband and wife Geoff and Katie Melkonian and Geoff's sister, Wendy. Katie recently talked to *The Sunday Paper* about their rise to success.

**Q** Breadwinner is a clever play on words.

**A** We formulated the name on Thanksgiving night last year. We are all pretty creative people with creative backgrounds. We had lists and lists of names—one was better than another, but it wasn't quite popping. Geoff actually thought of Breadwinner in a burst of midnight energy that popped out of his mouth. The three of us said, "Done. It's perfect."

**The business got started over the Thanksgiving holiday?**

We were on vacation with our family last November. And Geoff has his head stuck in the fridge assessing the leftovers. He says we have two dozen eggs. So Wendy says she is gonna make some pumpkin bread. As she's getting out the ingredients, she says, in almost a whisper, "Jenny [Levison of *Souper Jenny*] told me I could sell bread in her store." My ears perk up. I say we are taking 10 loaves to *Souper Jenny* on Monday. Her face lights up. We made pumpkin bread all weekend long—her mom's recipe, my mom's recipes, grandma's recipes—until we found the one we wanted to use.

**What happened next?**

We sold out in an hour. That was a pretty good indication. So we made 10 more loaves. Long story short, between Thanksgiving and Christmas, without promoting, we sold 550 loaves of pumpkin bread. This was the real deal, something we all wanted to do.

**Is this full-time now?**

Yes. I used to work in the marketing department at the Cartoon Network. After I had my first child, I decided to stay home with her. After my second child, I wanted to get back into something—use my business mind again! I wanted a sense of ownership, and I wasn't interested in corporate America.

We all three love to be in the kitchen, and we all come from many generations who love to bake. Wendy is an amazing actor, and Geoff is a music producer, so it is part-time for them.

**You have a Web site, right?**

Yes, we have an online store. Our customers are outstanding. We are so appreciative of them. It's a loyal following. We ship all over the country—lots of Southeastern states, Iowa, California.

**The loaves have serious heft. What do they weigh?**

Two pounds. Each loaf is two pounds of yumminess.

**When you see the names, you can't help but smile: "Better than a bubble bath mocha chocolate chip" and "Houdini zucchini."**

We like to have fun. And I think that it's important for word of mouth to get people to connect with the bread. There's a big difference when you see "Be still my beating tart" versus "lemon blueberry." Each bread has its own identity, its own personality.

**I love the crunchy bits on the chocolate bread.**

Wendy experiments a lot in the kitchen. Geoff tasted it. You know how a song has a hook? He said the bread needs a hook. We sprinkled it with toffee when it came out of the oven. Now Geoff tastes every new bread.

**What about those poor souls who count carbs?**

We have people who inquire. But it is not stopping us, and it is certainly not affecting our sales. These are dessert or breakfast breads. The whole family will eat them.

**The breads are übermoist. I found myself eating them morning, noon and night. Do you test your products on your kids?**

They're my No. 1 focus group! They eat them like they are going out of style! We have lots of mom fans who say their kids love the bread. They like serving it in the mornings before they run off to school.

**Your breads are seasonal.**

We have five right now. They are all made fresh with no preservatives. They are not sitting on shelves for months. They will last a week and a half in the fridge or two months in the freezer. They have staying power.

**What are you currently working on?**

Banana bread will be out in a couple of weeks. It's called "Sweet home ala-banana." **SP**

For more information on Breadwinner, visit [www.getloafed.com](http://www.getloafed.com) or call 404-822-9889.