

## MO CHEEKS / BREAD & JUSTICE



Mo Cheeks runs *Bread & Justice*, a cottage bakery in Madison Wisconsin. Bread & Justice is a philanthropic business that donates 100% of the profits from the sale of their handmade sourdough bread each week to nonprofits that are building a more just society. The engine of Bread & Justice is the weekly newsletter where Mo celebrates nonprofits that he's donating to, shares about his baking process, announces weekly bakes, and reflects openly on social justice issues and events. Mo and his wife Melissa have two young kids who seem to prefer their dad's crusty sourdough with a smear of peanut butter on top.



- **Tell us about your journey into bread baking. What have been some of the highs that you've experienced?**

*I was first taught to make sourdough bread in 2017, but since my wife was regularly baking bread and other pastries I didn't put much time into practicing on my own. It wasn't until January 2020 that I finally decided to re-start the learning process. Then after the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, my bread production increased rapidly as it became a form of self-care, a time for quiet prayer, and a practice of manifesting joy during a dark summer. Bread & Justice (my weekly newsletter and cottage bakery) was born towards the end of that year when I realized that I could transition my bread-making into a business that donates 100% of profits to nonprofits that are working for social justice and combating racism in America.*

- **On the flipside, what are some of the challenges you have overcome to be where you are today?**

*I'm very much still in the early stages of shaping what the future of Bread & Justice will be. In the first few weeks of 2021, the demand to buy bread from me was a bit overwhelming. I wrote about this in my newsletter in February, but I had to seriously reflect on how fast I wanted to allow the business to grow. Accepting that some percentage of customer demand would go unmet each week was challenging, but making the intentional decision to only grow the business at a pace that I was comfortable with was the right move for me.*

- **What is the next career milestone you hope to reach?**

*As a cottage baker, using my family's refrigerator, oven, counters and sink results in a LOT of cleaning each week, and requires an even greater amount of patience from my wife and kids each week. The next milestone that we dream about is saving up to turn our basement into a little dedicated micro-bakery. This would result in me being able to produce significantly more bread, donate more to social justice organizations, and establish a sustainable footing for the future of Bread & Justice.*

- **Who or what do you look to for inspiration? Is there a specific source you recommend?**

*I've gotten a ton of inspiration from the community of sourdough bakers on Instagram. There are too many to name, but I'm so very thankful for how welcoming and encouraging the bread community is.*

- **Based on your personal experiences, what advice would you offer to others entering this industry?**

*Speaking only about the cottage baking industry, first I'd encourage others to pursue it if they believe they can maintain a passion for it. Turning your home kitchen into a workspace can be stressful, so it is important to be realistic with yourself about why you're doing it. Secondly, I'd strongly encourage you to think creatively about how you can use your existing space and existing equipment. Being able to hold off on buying expensive equipment has helped me to put off a lot of financial stress. I recommend waiting on as many expenses as possible until they become real obstacles for scaling to the next step in the growth of your cottage baking business.*

- **And the most important question of all, what's your favorite bread to eat or make at the moment?**

*I love bread, but my favorite baked food is actually kind of bread adjacent. Long before I learned to make bread, I was making pizza from scratch for my family every Friday. Arguably my favorite thing about studying the process of sourdough bread making is that it made me a much better pizza maker.*

- **What recipe would you like to share with the community?**

My go to sourdough bagel recipe (that my kids love to help with) is the one from Rosehill Sourdough's ebook. Which is also shared on this [\*\*YouTube video\*\*](#).