



Sylviana Herrin

La Petite Délicat – Lexington, KY

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Rosie Moosnick: Okay. So I am Rosie Moosnick, and it's August 24th, 2023, and we are on National Avenue in Lexington, Kentucky.

Sarah Jane Webb: It's Sarah Jane Webb.

Sylviana Herrin: I'm Sylviana Herrin with La Petite Délicat.

Rosie Moosnick: Okay. Sylvia or Sylvie?

Sylviana Herrin: Sylvie.

Rosie Moosnick: Is that a nickname, Sylvie?

Sylviana Herrin: It's a nickname of Sylviana, yes.

[Laughter]

Rosie Moosnick: So if you wanna tell us just how this came about?

Sylviana Herrin: How do I start with the business?

Rosie Moosnick: Yeah.

Sylviana Herrin: It depend. You want it to start from all the beginning, how I came to United States and then-- or how--?

Rosie Moosnick: Sure, you can start there, yeah.

Sylviana Herrin: Okay. So I came to United States in year of 2000.

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And I came as a student at that time. I actually left my-- I originally from Indonesia. I left my country at that time because of there's a political riot demonstration at that time in 1998 that caused a lot of violence and attack to the minor Chinese minority at that time. And I'm Chinese-Indonesian. So at that time, not knowing what is the future is going to hold in my country, my parents thought that it's probably best if all of the girls-- I have five siblings: four girls and then one boy. So my parents feel like it's probably better if the girls go to a different country.

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And at that time, United States is offering asylum and things like that. But I didn't get that asylum. I didn't apply for that. But I have a- my older sister was already here in United States in Lexington, Kentucky, pursuing school at UK (University of Kentucky). So because of that, why wouldn't you come over here? So I came, and then went to school at the-- actually I didn't go to UK. I went to EKV (Eastern Kentucky University) 'cause I like a smaller school. I pursue another degree. I already had my accounting degree in Indonesia, but I took another degree with this industrial technology, and I graduated, and then I got a job. And then actually before I opened the bakery, I work in the manufacturing company for almost seven years. But then I get married. Me and my husband get married, and I have a daughter. When she was 18 months, I decided to stay home with her.

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And at that time, since I've been working the entire my time, I got that rhythm, you know, like when you stay home, this is a huge challenge. I was not really sure if I want to do that, resign, and then stay home. But, like, I'm going to give it a try, and then stay home. But then when

she's-- baby took a lot of naps, right? And then she's one of them that like to nap. So when she's napping, like, okay, what I'm going to do?

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: That's when my, okay, I'm going to start baking things. So I grew up with-- my mom used to own a catering, a small catering. She's a homemaker. She doesn't work anywhere, but she, you know, taking up order for wedding, small wedding. And then because she has five kids to take care of, and I remember, you know, growing up, helping her, preparing for the party, wake up early in the morning. She like to make bread and croissants and all of that.

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So I remember helping her, and I guess that did make more sense. Naturally, when I am not doing anything, okay, I'm going to go back to the kitchen. And then at that time, I was thinking about what can I-- I want to learn something new. And things that come to my mind at that time initially is the macaroons, and then they have a history about that. So prior to my resign, my husband took me to Egypt. [Laughter] So for part of his job, he has a conference in Egypt, and said, "Why don't you go with me, since you don't work anymore?" So I tag along with him. We stay in the hotel. And then in the first floor, they have this French café. At that time, I didn't know at all about macaroons. And I went to that French café. They have this display case full of those-- I call it button at that time because I don't know what they are.

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The way that they display all of the macaroons beautifully with all different shade of colors is so beautiful, a lot of them.

[unrelated conversation]

Sylviana Herrin: So, yeah, then that's why I was so-- those, I didn't know what they are. I'm too embarrassed to ask, because it's a fancy place. I'm like, okay, I don't want to ask stupid question. Is this something that you sell or this is just for display? But then we only stayed there for three days. And then my husband said, "Well, before we leave, are you sure you don't want to ask about this? 'Cause you come every single day [laughter] to look at that space," because they're so beautiful. So I finally asked the person behind the counter what they are, and they said, "This is French macaroon."

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I think the company is from-- well, I don't know how to say it. But it's from a very well-known company who bring the macaroons to them, and then they sell it at their café. So I said, okay, I got two of them. Me and my husband sat down, and then tried that. It was like the amazing things that ever happened in my mouth. Like, this is so-- it's beautiful. It tastes wonderful. It's petite. I don't feel guilty eating it. It's just amazing. So that's why when I went home, and then during that time, I'm like, okay, I'm going to try to make macaroons. Before that, I tried, okay, when I come back, I'm going to try to find a bakery who sell this. Is any bakery in Lexington selling this? So I searched on all the bakery in Lexington. I only found two places that sell the macaroons at that time. But, to my surprise, I didn't see a display case full of macaroons.

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They only have two flavors, you know, like maybe chocolate or something else, just two flavors or maybe just one. And sometimes they make them; sometimes they don't because they're not focusing just the macaroons. So then I decided I'm going to try to make it my own, 'cause I just

love it, and then it's just beautiful. I start searching online. I buy a lot of cookbook. I went to the blog. That's how I get to know Stella Parks' (local pastry chef with whom Sarah Jane has worked) blogs, because during that period of time when I tried to learn how to make macarons, I fail so many times. I have still a book of all of my failures, 37 times that I tried to make them. My husband is an engineer, so he helped me try to analyze all of the mistakes--

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: --try to do that. And then I read a lot of from the blog. Stella Parks helped me a lot on that. She doesn't know [laughter], but it's helped me a lot to pinpoint my mistakes and perfecting my recipe.

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And then at one point, when it's consistently-- it's always baked nice, and never fail anymore, I know at that point that this is it. So then I said, what I'm going to do next? I'm already satisfied with what I have, and I'm going to stop? Then my husband said, "Well, you can try to sell them." And I'm like, "Where I'm going to sell it?" So I don't want to have a lot of overhead. I don't know what to expect. I have no idea when I resigned from the company, this is what I'm going to do. I'm like, okay, this is, oh yeah, maybe I can sell it online. And I'm familiar with Etsy, so like, I'm selling at Etsy. I don't have to have overhead. I can, at that time, I can bake it at home, because I thought who's going to buy from me?

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: So I just go-- I have a lot of picture. I love taking pictures. So when I make the macarons, when they're perfect, I take that picture.

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So I already have tons of pictures, so it's easy for me just post it, what I'm going to sell, the price. And I try to still figure it out how to ship. And the next day, I got an order. [Laughter] I'm like, oh wow, okay, I got an order, a pack of 12. Okay. So start making them, and then I'll just try to figure out how to ship them. The first packaging arrive broken, you know, and then so I get a replacement. I learned that too, how to pack them correctly. And then the customer is very, very nice. They give me a feedback. And I say, "I'll send you another one if you can give me feedback, how did it come out." And so from there, I learned how to ship and pack them. And then order kept coming in. And then at one point, I said I cannot bake from home anymore. So at that time, my daughter's already going to go to the pre-k, so is going to be in the school for maybe four hours at a time.

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I find a kitchen in Winchester, and then renting it for-- during the period when she go to school, I bake, and then I pick her up. And it works perfect, until it's gotten too much because I have to go drive to Winchester.

Rosie Moosnick: All the way to Winchester, yeah.

Sylviana Herrin: Because it's so hard to find a commercial kitchen that you can share in Lexington at that time. But then--

Rosie Moosnick: What year was this?

Sylviana Herrin: That was like in 2013. But then, well, during that period, I went to the Kentucky Food Show. When I would start shipping through Etsy, I realized that why is all my customers from the big city, like Chicago, Texas--

Sarah Jane Webb: Oh, really?

Sylviana Herrin: --Colorado, California? None of them from Kentucky. So I know there is a-- they're missing this--

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: --product, so how do I get this product-- how do I get them to know this product while I don't have the storefront?

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So then my husband said, "You know that there is a Kentucky Food Show? You can show your products there." I'm like, "You know that that's a big show? There's a lot of people coming in. I'm not that level yet." "But if you want Kentucky people know your product, this is it. You got to do that." So [laughter] I was like, "How many do I make?" I would make at least probably 1,000 thousand macarons that time. The entire day, I just nonstop because I didn't bake that on the commercial oven. It's just like a home oven, one after one. It's just like keep baking, and making another one, keep baking, until I get 1,000. I sold them all at the food show. But the best thing that ever happened at that food show is the networking.

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I got to know to a lot of people. I get to know Toa from Crank & Boom. I get to know people from farmers market, things that I have no clue how to, you know, to interact or how to find

these people. And Bridget actually introduced me to Crank & Boom, Toa, so that's why we collaborate, making the ice cream, Crank & Boom, with the macaroons, macaroon ice cream sandwiches.

Sarah Jane Webb: Oh, really?

Sylviana Herrin: Yeah, so we did that. And also Toa mentioned about, okay, well, you're looking at a commercial kitchen in Lexington? My landlord is actually looking for somebody, a tenant in Lexington who can use her kitchen. So I moved to the Lexington kitchen, and then the farmers market, I get to know the person who in charge of the farmers market. This is the things that you have to sign up for, you have to apply, and then they will accept that, they review that.

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And they accept, got selected. I got selected, and then I start selling at farmers market for two years. And it's that two years at farmers market is enough for me to get to introduce my product to Kentucky people, to Lexington people. I have very strong follower. I feel strong enough to open my first brick and mortar. 'Cause it's pretty tiring to be in the farmers market. I have to get up at 5:00, get everything ready, set-up by 7:00. At that time, my daughter is only four years old or three, so we have to-- my husband will bring her, and then she's in the car sleeping. I'll pack everything. And then he leave, and then pick me up again. So for that two years, I get my customers base. Then I like, okay, let's open the first store.

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So I did that at Chevy Chase at that time, behind next to the Wilson Music Store. And I want it simple. I only want to sell macarons, and I want to make that my bakery will be the first bakery that specialize in macarons. There's a lot of question from customer when they come. "How do

you make it just-- how do you-- how can be successful just making macarons only?" Like I said, well, we're going to have a lot of products-- not a lot of prod... a lot of flavors; not just one or two. But that's what I'm focusing. I just believe that perfecting one item is easier for me instead of trying to have so many things while I'm trying to figure out how to run the business. I think the simplest, the better so I can focus on that while trying to, you know, finding more revenue, and then to pay all of that overhead.

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I don't want to have too many payroll. I only need one or two people to help me with the macaron, including me. Three people is enough: one in the front, one person to helping me making macarons. And that's a low overhead for me. And try to-- I already have the customer who know me from farmers market. And now I just tell them, "I open a store. Now you cannot find me at farmers market, but you can find me in this store." So I feel better that way because I already have a follower. Make it the transition easier. I mean, that's how I promoting my bakery. If you want to find macarons fresh that we make every single day in small batches, you can pick any flavors that you want. I want to try to keep about 20 to 25 at that time. Then you can come to my store. You can pick any flavor you want. You get the box, and then you just tell us which flavor you want to put in the box.

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And it works perfectly, 'cause it's stress. It has some stress, but it's not very stressful because we only have one product. And it's easier for me to teach my baker too, because it's only one product to teach. We started-- I started the bakery in 2000...brick and mortar in 2015. And in 2017, I have to move to a different place, not by my choice. So I have no-- I have to move, either I want

it or not. When I moved to this current location right now in 722 National Avenue, it's double the space of my previous store. And at that time, I wasn't sure. Do I really want to do this or not?

This is double rent, double overhead, double everything. What I'm going to do?

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Macaroon itself is not going to do this. Because I noticed that from two years selling macaroons, people usually come around 10:00 or 11:00 to get macaron. They don't come in the morning to buy macarons. That's why we only open at 10:00 at that time. But here, in order for me to be able to cover the double rents, I need to come up with something. So that's how I decided to learn how to make croissants, some things that I can offer in the morning to fill that gap. And I taught myself how to make the croissants, laminating and everything, and start selling, and then learn how to do the espresso [laughter]. And it works very well. So from then on, we have morning, we have croissants and all the pastries, quiche, and scones. And then in the afternoon, we also-- people come for the macaroons, until we close at 4:00. So it works really well.

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And then I continue adding more bakers, who is very talented, adding more things. "Oh, I want to add in more to the display case." "Okay, if you want to add more in cheesecake, go ahead, you know, you do that." Because my goal, my focus is still on macaroons because I want to keep adding new flavors in the macarons. But if my other baker can contribute with a different flavor, different things they can add, like cheesecake, they will do that. So I still want to just focus on the macaron. My other baker is contributing and helping with the other desserts. And we have-- I actually signed a second lease on this location. We've been here for-- this is our six years. So I signed another five years in that location, and it's going great.

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We're selling our macaroons at Keeneland during the Keeneland Meets. So that's when the busy time, you know, like in the fall and the spring Keeneland Meets, we are pretty busy with the macarons. And then during Mother's Day, January, February, Valentine's, you know, all of that holidays, and then Christmas, we are super busy. And we also start selling our croissant and pastries to-- we wholesale that now to the coffee shop in town. Like, coffee, Old School Coffee and Leestown Coffee Shop, Luna Coffee and Wine in Harrisburg, they all carry our croissants and quiche. And we hoping to adding more on the wholesale.

[Laughter]

Sarah Jane Webb: Oh my goodness.

Rosie Moosnick: That's a lot [laughter].

Sylviana Herrin: Yeah. But now I feel better because I have a great team.

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So I try to have all the team that focusing on one thing in that way that they are, you know, just one baker that focusing on macaroons, one baker just focusing on the croissants, and then one just focusing on cake and then cheesecake. And then they're pretty happy with doing their own task, you know, while we're all helping each other with whatever that we need. But we are happy family in here [laughter].

Rosie Moosnick: I have to say, they seem really happy.

Sylviana Herrin: Yeah, we are very close to each other. If one person look down, you know, we're pretty sure that everybody's going to hug that person, and increase that person. We never

let one person feel down the entire day. We try to encourage each other. And then that's how everybody's, you know, I want everybody to be happy working, not just come to for, you know, like paycheck is great, but you're not just working for a paycheck, but you're working for the friendship.

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And that's how the culture I created on my bakery. I want everybody to, you know, helping each other, and caring to each other. So we're a pretty happy family here, and it just make me happy to be around them too. So that's why when I'm thinking about splitting my team here, like, I don't want to do that to my team [laughter]. I don't even want to be here by myself too. I want to be around them. So as long as you guys is okay, we are overcrowded here, we are elbow to elbow, they said, "We'd rather to be like that instead of to be isolated." I said, "Okay, if that's what you want, we just have to be like scheduling our oven. There's no fighting over oven. It's everybody just working each other, you know, we can make it work." So we'll see what I'm going to do next.

[Laughter]

I mean, this location is [inaudible] right now.

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But I have so many plans I want to do. I'm teaching macaron classes too. And a lot of my customer who took my macaron classes, they also want to learn how to do croissant classes. So I might doing this place here as a, you know, classes more. So I can do that too.

Rosie Moosnick: How many on staff do you have?

Sylviana Herrin: How many staff do I have right now? It's about 13. So we have like full-time, between full-time, and then part-times. A lot of them is part-time. A lot of my teams, they're moms, so they have kids they have to take care of. Most of our bakers have to leave at 2:00 because that's the time when we go home and pick up our kids. And most of the people who stay to close the store, usually it's college students.

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Sarah Jane Webb: Yeah, that makes sense.

Sylviana Herrin: Because they come in the morning to open, it's the college student because all the moms have to take their kids to school. If my husband cannot take my kids to school, then I will have to take her to school.

Sarah Jane Webb: How long do you see your employees staying? Are they staying for years at a time? Is it really individual?

Sylviana Herrin: It's really depend. If it's college student, after they graduate, you know, some college student, they only have one more year, and then I expecting them just for one year. But most of my bakers, they stay for me for a long time. Lorena has been for me since I opened the other store, so she's been with me for almost seven years now. She actually my first customer, like, who came to my store, and then learn-- we have a macaroon class. She was one of the first student.

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So she was come as a customer [laughter]. And then she took my macaroon class. And then after that, she become my employee for part-time. She just love macaroons. She has the same passion

as macaroons as me. That's why she's right now, she's in charge of the macaroons. And then Heba is the store manager. She's been with me for almost four years. And one of the barista has been with me for three years. So most of them has been with me for a long time. The one who come and go most of the time is usually the person who barista, which is most of them are college students. So after they graduate, they get a job, they leave somewhere. But most of them, they stay pretty long. Ashley, the cake baker, has been with me for almost two and a half years now. And it seems that she's going to keep staying for hopefully for a long time.

[Laughter]

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Rosie Moosnick: What do you look for in persons to hire them when you're-- that you could create this really happy environment?

Sylviana Herrin: Well, I'm looking for somebody who always have a positive attitude, and caring, and then teamwork. It's a lot of teamwork happening in the team, even though everybody, every baker have their own task. But we all-- I don't have a person who doing the-- washing the dishes. I don't hire just one person to do that. We all contribute, helping each other. So I'm looking for somebody who not just hard worker but they also have to be-- always have a positive attitude, positive thinking. There's a teamwork, you know, and they are reliable.

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That's very important too, because if they're not reliable, it's affecting all the other bakers too. Because every bakers have their own schedule, for example, to use the oven, if the other bakers that have to come earlier before them didn't come in time, it's going to affect the other baker's

schedule. So reliable, it's very hard right now, I feel like, to find in younger [laughter] generation. Older generation is easier, I think, but the younger generation is a little bit challenging.

Sarah Jane Webb: Why do you think that is?

Sylviana Herrin: I don't know. I feel like I'm still trying to figure it out too, as far as the reliability. Is it because-- I feel like the younger generation, they don't, I mean, they very entitled to themselves, you know, sometimes.

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I feel like they don't push themselves hard enough, you know, like you have a little bit obstacle, then you give up. You need to keep pushing it through. You might wake up in the morning, have like a little bit headache, but if you keep fighting it, you can get through that. I just feel like they not pushing enough. Well, I think that older generation, I feel like if I wake up, if I cannot get up from my bed because I have like a fever then, you know, you will see me [laughter] in the bakery. And then the same thing with the other, unless that we cannot get up from my bed, you know, you will see me in here. I have a little bit headache? I will still show up. But a lot of young kids, "I just have a little bit headache. I just, you know, I get bruises on my leg. I limping a little bit then I cannot come."

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It's just that I feel like they just need to push themselves a little bit more. Then they can get through that. Just don't get a little obstacle hinder them from getting things done.

Rosie Moosnick: Where do you think you learned that resilience, pushing through?

Sylviana Herrin: I think it's growing up Indonesia is a huge part of it. And I also exchange that-- I talk about that too with my bakers. I don't know if you notice that in my bakers, I have a lot of different ethnic from different countries.

Rosie Moosnick: I noticed that, yeah.

Sylviana Herrin: I'm from Indonesia. Lorena from Ecuador. Heba is from Palestine. And then I also have a baker who come only on Saturdays. She's from Japan. I have Cha from Korea. [Laughter] So we have all different nationality.

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And I talked a little bit with Lorena, a little bit with Heba. We grew up in the country where is a lot of poverty. Sometimes I feel like when I come to United States-- and it's probably because I come from Indonesia, which is like a third world country-- United States has a lot to offer. United States has so many things to offer, I mean, like a lot of opportunities in here, I feel like. But young generation didn't really try to absorb it as much as they could. While we are in the country like Indonesia, like [inaudible], we have so many people that seeking that opportunity, but we didn't have that opportunities, and we have to fight so hard to get that opportunity. That's why probably we are more resilient, released-- how do you say it?

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Resilience?

Rosie Moosnick: Resilient.

Sylviana Herrin: The international people is, I think it's because it doesn't come easy for us. We have to fight it so hard to be able to get that. And while here, I feel like everything is so easy

to achieve, but why nobody try to get it? You know what I mean? So I think that's because of the parts of how we grew up, the condition in our country help us to become stronger, in my opinion.

Rosie Moosnick: What was it like in your household?

Sylviana Herrin: At my current household or like back in--?

Rosie Moosnick: Where you grew up, in Indonesia.

Sylviana Herrin: Well, we have to wake up so early to be able to get to work, for example. Like, the traffic is so bad, to start with.

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So 30 minutes' driving, it can be like 3 hours. So if we have to be there at 8 a.m. to work, you have to wake up at 5:00 and to leave like at 6:00. So we wake up so early, and then it's already the habit, you know, we wake up early. And for getting the job, it's very compete, competing. I mean, you have to really try to be the best to be able to get the job that you want. So that's teach us, you know, people who go to the college, they really work hard, you know, study hard because they know that after you graduate, you're going to have to compete with so many applicants, and then you have to have a really good résumé and good grades. And then just, you know, as far as in my household, my dad is accountant so--

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Sarah Jane Webb: He's a what?

Sylviana Herrin: Accountant, working accountant.

Sarah Jane Webb: Oh, accountant, okay.

Sylviana Herrin: So he always mention it to us that education is very important. So he really makes sure that we all have education. No matter how hard he works, he'll try to make sure that we all have education. So all of five kids graduated from the school, and then we all be able to get a job after we graduate. But he makes sure that everybody have a really good education, because he knows that it's very important to be able to survive in, you know, to have a good living in Indonesia.

Rosie Moosnick: What was it like being Chinese in the--?

Sylviana Herrin: The minority?

Rosie Moosnick: Yeah. And I'm assuming you're not Muslim.

Sylviana Herrin: No. Yeah, 90% of people in Indonesia is Muslim. It's a Muslim country.

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I have friends who is Muslim, and then I get along with them really well. But I notice that, too, that there's some racism too in my country against minority, Chinese minority. Sometimes I still have a fear actually go to the public transportation when I go to school just because I'm Chinese. So I just don't feel comfortable. If I have friends with me who is not Chinese, then I will go to the public transportation. That's how I don't feel comfortable. So if I have a friend who is not Chinese, then I'll go, because I feel safe. I just feel, I don't know, I just feel like somebody is going to harass me or attack me just because I'm Chinese.

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That's why I try to avoid using the public transportation when I in Indonesia, and the fact that in a tragedy in 1998, they actually attacking those Chinese minority for some reason. It just make

me feel like much more uncomfortable. And then that's one of the reason why we-- that I came to United States 'cause I don't know what to expect [laughter] in the next, you know, this is pretty bad at that time. Like, if it's going to be getting worse, well, there is still an opportunity to come to United States, then I'll take that chance, especially at that time when the Americans really open to welcoming us because of the situation at that time.

Rosie Moosnick: Is your family still in Indonesia?

Sylviana Herrin: Yeah, my family is still in Indonesia, and my mother and my dad and my brother.

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So we only have one brother. All four girls is already here in the United States. But I'm glad that he stay because he doesn't want to leave. He wants to be there for my parents. Now, Indonesia is getting better and better. It's just the transportation, I mean, the traffic is still worse, getting worse and worse. But as far as the interaction between the minority and then the Muslim, I think this is getting better. I fear less when I come back to visit my parents, compared to 20 years ago when I was a student.

Rosie Moosnick: What language did you all speak in the home?

Sylviana Herrin: It's in Malay, Indonesian language.

Rosie Moosnick: So did you speak Chinese at home?

Sylviana Herrin: No, we don't speak Chinese, so we don't speak Mandarin.

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My dad did a little bit with his father, but he didn't teach us how to speak Mandarin. In fact, when I was in the elementary school, we're actually forbidden to speak Chinese. We cannot speak Chinese. We are not allowed to speak Chinese. So that's probably one of the reasons too that I didn't learn how to speak Chinese. We all just speak Indonesia because it was not allowed to speak Chinese at all in that school. But I wish that I know how to speak Mandarin, but it's okay.

[Laughter]

Rosie Moosnick: What kind of food was in your home growing up?

Sylviana Herrin: We use a lot of spices. It's more like a lot of curries kind of type of food.

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It's close to, I think, Indian food 'cause we're using a lot of like earth spices, lemongrass. We're using fresh-- I don't know what to say that in English though. I know what is the words for Indonesia, but it's almost similar to we're using turmeric, something like that, peppercorn, and bay leaves, so things like that. So it's more like toward Indian food, I think. And sometimes it's a little bit toward the Thai food too. So using a lot of spices like hot spice too. We like hot food.

Rosie Moosnick: In the community, so who were your family's closest friends? Was that other Chinese-Indonesians or--?

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Sylviana Herrin: So the place, the neighborhood where my mom or my parents live, it's very tight community. And then we have all different people like Muslim or Christian, Indonesian or Chinese, but they all blend together wonderfully. So that neighborhood is really in

a nice neighborhood that we respect each other religion, and then also either you are Chinese or you are Indonesian. We work together very well. So they're in the-- more like in the southern area. I think some part, you know, like southern area, they have a really nice blend of people, community. While there are some part is just Chinese people, and then some part, it's just like Indonesian people.

0:39:02

And so I grew up where my parents live, blending with everybody. So I feel safe in that community. It's just when I have to go out, for example, to go to my college, which is far away, it's going to be a different area. Sometimes I just feel uncomfortable that way if I have to use the public transportation. But when I get into the school, meeting all of these students from a different religion, they're all in a really good community again. But it's just like sometimes outside, it's just like, I'm not really sure how they react to us. But that was like 20 years ago. So I'm sure that now it already get improvement.

0:40:00

As a matter of fact that we had one in the government that was-- it's a minority Chinese. So that's a huge improvement because before that, it's how to be Muslim who get into the government, you know, political. But now we had the governor that is a minority Chinese. So that's a really great sign, really.

Rosie Moosnick: When do you think about home when you're here?

Sylviana Herrin: When? During the holidays [laughter], especially like Christmas. We celebrate Christmas really big in my country 'cause we are Christian. So that's when I'm thinking

about home a lot, you know, to celebrate Christmas with my family, baking cookies, Christmas cookies with my mom.

0:41:03

She always bakes some things, you know, a lot of things, cookies and layer cakes for the Christmas celebration. We always together helping all the girls making the-- bake the cakes. But now we all different places here in United States, and that's what I miss a lot. And it's so far away, you know, so it's not like I can just get a ticket and then get there in three hours. It's going to be a long time to get there. So the holidays is the one. We only have a big holiday usually on Christmas. We don't have a lot of holiday like in United States. We don't have-- we have Easter, but Christmas usually is the big one for us.

0:42:00

Rosie Moosnick: How do you experience how people read you ethnically or-- in this country-- culturally?

Sylviana Herrin: In here, I think everybody here is accepting me as without seeing me as a Chinese or like not American, at least in Lexington here. I feel like everybody is welcoming us without have to see what kind of race you are or what kind of religion you are. I mean, everybody here is just really nice to each other. I mean, it's very friendly. So I really-- that's why probably one of the reason why I really like to live in Lexington. I feel like everybody get along, and they don't really discriminate you based on what you look and what your religion is, at least that's how I feel.

0:42:58

Everybody is just welcoming us as far as somebody from outside their country. I feel safe here in Lexington. I talk to even with Heba too. Heba is from Muslim, and we just feel very safe here. We all respect each other, respect that she is a Muslim. And then so when we try to-- when we provide something like have, you know, pork or meat, bacon, for example, we'll make sure that she didn't touch it. We bake bacon, and we clean our tray so she doesn't have to touch it. So we respect her religion, and then we just respect each other.

Rosie Moosnick: Do you have a religious or spiritual tradition you participate in?

Sylviana Herrin: Yeah, my family and I is a Christian.

0:44:00

So we go to, you know, like we actively involved in the church activities. So we not just go-- we go to a church every Sunday, and then also we have a Bible class on Wednesday. And we try to do everything based on what the Bible teach us. And I think that it's the same, you know, like apply to even Muslim too. They do the same thing. They teach the same thing. They teach about how to respect other people too, you know, do good things. And that's how I apply that to the bakery, to the team.

0:44:59

We're just helping each other be kind to everybody. I respect everybody.

Rosie Moosnick: So you integrate your religious practice into your business?

Sylviana Herrin: Yeah. I didn't enforce my religion to my team who is not the Christian. But they know that I'm a Christian. I have my view as far as a Christian. I believe in God and I believe in Jesus. And I practice-- I didn't, well, I didn't enforce them. They are a Muslim. They

believe in their God. But I respect their belief. And in the same time, I also expect them to respect my belief.

0:46:01

Rosie Moosnick: What's your typical customer who comes in your store?

Sylviana Herrin: It's kind of range from-- majority is female. But they probably range from maybe in their 30s. Most of the customer who get the macaroons is usually a little bit younger. They're probably about 20 to 30s. Most of the customer, I noticed that a customer who is older, they don't know much about macaroons, so they usually come for the pastries. I have like from 20 to 60 years old. But most of them are female. I can say that maybe 85% to 90% are female.

0:47:00

The guys usually just come to get drinks: espresso, cold brew, and things like that. If they get pastry-- rarely they get pastry. If they get pastry, they probably just get something savory like ham and cheese croissants. But most of the female who get the sweets--

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: --treats. But I have a lot of kids too, you know, young kids who enjoy the macaroons or the macaroon ice cream sandwiches.

Sarah Jane Webb: And you have those sandwiches, the ice cream sandwiches available?

Sylviana Herrin: Yes. So it's really depend when we can [laughter] make them. So Crank & Boom right now doesn't do the wholesale. But at that one point, we do some kind of collaboration with them while we give some macaroons to them, so they can make like a-- they do the small batch.

0:48:00

So they did the French macaroons ice cream, and then we trade the ice cream with them. So I trade the macarons to them, and then they give us the ice cream. So we had that ice cream that we make the macaron ice cream sandwiches. So, after that, stocks depleted, so I don't know when I'll be able to get more ice cream from them, because they're super busy right now. And then they're not doing a wholesale, like, ice cream anymore to everyone. So I think the only things that I can get ice cream from them to do this if we're doing some kind of collaboration like that, trading things. So while we still have it, we try to make them, it's just like adding that into all of the baking schedules, it's already pretty packed. So we try to do it the best that we can [laughter] with-- and then there's a lot of demands in there. It's just hard to prepare that.

0:49:00

Sarah Jane Webb: Do you experience a lot of waste?

Sylviana Herrin: Yes and no, which we try. As far as the waste, the only waste that we have right now that I've tried to figure it out how to avoid that, 'cause we always try to come up with something not to wasting. I don't like to waste food at all. So we always come up with a new item that we can use from the scrap or the waste, which usually turn out perfectly.

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: The only thing right now that we still haven't figured out, so our waste is pretty minimum, except for when we make the macarons, which is we-- when we make macarons, we only use the egg white, so we don't use the egg yolk.

0:50:04

We try to make-- we make lemon curd, using the egg yolk. But we just make so many [laughter] macarons in a day, in a week that we just get so many egg yolk that we cannot keep up with. We can make so much of lemon curd. What can we use this egg yolk for? So we save it to make egg wash, so we use that too. So we try to collect as much of every egg yolk that we can to make different products. But unfortunately right now, the only thing that we still have the biggest waste is the egg yolk, which I hope eventually I'll be able to use that egg yolk to make ice cream [laughter].

0:51:00

But that's my next steps. I have the machine to make that. I just like, okay, we have this egg yolk. We got to use this. What we can do with this? We already allocate that to make the lemon curd. We already use that to make egg wash. Use that to make pastry cream. And that's how we come up with the cruffin too, the cruffin filling made of the egg yolk. So we use that for the cruffin, but we just make so many macaroons, and we get so many egg yolks. But ice cream is going to be eggs.

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: It's just like we got to try, just make small batches. Especially with Crank & Boom, probably it's too busy that they're not going to get the ice cream. Let's make our own ice cream just for a small batch so we can make the macaroon sandwiches ourself, and we already have egg yolk. So that will be probably our next one [laughter] I want to try to make.

0:52:00

And that will be, you know, use up all of the egg yolk that we have. And that's just the only thing that we have left over usually the most. But other than that, all my bakers, they don't like waste.

Every scraps that they have, "Can I take it home, please, take it home?"

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: Like, when we cut the dough, anybody, we save that, you know, like anybody want to take this scrap dough, so they, this baker here take it home, and they make it something, bring it to us for breakfast. So it's a wonderful thing. Or we can make that dough to make like a pizza dough, and then we put something on the top, and then we have plans for pizza. So we always try to make sure that we don't waste a lot of things. We keep them. We make small batches, and we keep every scrap that we cannot control, just like egg yolk, we cannot control that.

0:53:03

I mean, I have to just using the egg white. And then we just try to come up with what can we do to use this product? Unfortunately, I wish that we can trade that egg yolk to somebody to be able to use that. I just don't know how Health Department is going to be happy about that, because it's from one baker transported to a different baker. And especially talking about egg yolk, it has to be in the certain temperature. So it's going to have a lot of approval to be able to do that. And I don't want the other baker who receive that getting the problem. So it's just too much of risk involving egg yolk. But we're going to use that eventually. I just, you know, I have all this idea what we can use, what we can do, what can we add in more, you know, on top of everything that we already have.

0:54:02

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: But I know that the demand for the macaroon ice cream sandwiches is huge out there. It's just finding the ice cream that is really good. And Crank & Boom ice cream is wonderful. It just--

Rosie Moosnick: It is.

Sylviana Herrin: It is, yeah. And there's so much that we can get from them. So I'm just going to try to make it our own, just for the ice cream sandwiches, and we can make it with the different flavors too that we want. And then one thing that the bakers love, creativity. And I usually just let them come up with something, and we all can try as a team, and then we can say, yeah or nah, and then-- or we can try to sell it. If it didn't sell, then we pull it from the case, and then try different things. So that's one thing I like about them, and they like that freedom too.

0:54:55

As long as you stay inside what I expect the baker is going to be, you're not making donuts, for example, because I don't do that. I don't have a fryer and things like that. As long as you're within that scope, I like everything petite. That's what the La Petite Délicat is, it's petite delicate. Everything's petite, you know, not super big [laughter], something that unique. That's what I always tell them. Find something, make something that unique that other bakery doesn't have it. And then I hope that that bring customer in because this is a unique place to find these certain products. And then they pretty-- they enjoy that to be challenged like that.

Rosie Moosnick: What other things are you scheming for the future? What other [laughter]-- you have the ice cream. What other things are you thinking for the future?

Sylviana Herrin: There's a lot of things.

[Laughter]

I know--

Rosie Moosnick: Other ideas churning--

Sarah Jane Webb: [Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: Yes.

Rosie Moosnick: --aren't there?

Sylviana Herrin: I know that I love bread.

0:56:00

I don't like sweet treats. I don't have a sweet tooth. But bread, croissants [laughter], I cannot resist that. So the next thing I want to make is actually baguette, and then all the bread, sourdough bread. I want to learn all of that. That's the one thing that I haven't really improved myself how to learn, how to make that. And that's one thing that I want to learn, and hopefully that we'll be able to do that. Just that in order for me to do that, I need the space, and that the space that is already too crowded in there. So maybe this place is going to be an opportunity for me to kind of like a development, business development, creating new things in here. It's kind of like our lab. 'Cause a lot of customer are already requesting that. "When you're going to have baguette? Because it's very hard to find a really good baguette here."

0:57:00

"We have to go all the way to Bluegrass Baking Company while we are living in this area." I said, "Well, from now on, you probably [laughter] have to go over there, because I haven't learned about that yet. It might coming in the future. I don't know when." I don't know. Hopefully that is not too hard to make.

[Laughter]

Rosie Moosnick: She used to work at Bluegrass Baking Company.

Sarah Jane Webb: You should go over there.

Sylviana Herrin: They could help you.

Sylviana Herrin: Yeah? It's just like what kind of oven? I have to learn what kind of oven? Is it going to be like a specific oven? The type of mixer, you know, the temperature, all of that is going to be like-- but I like to learn new things, and then that's going to be very challenging, and something that I would love to learn how to make. Because, like I said, everything I produce here, I teach myself how to make them. If I can make macaroons, I can learn how to make baguette.

0:58:01

[Laughter]

Sarah Jane Webb: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely.

Rosie Moosnick: I think so most people would be--

[Laughter]

Rosie Moosnick: --too intimidated to learn.

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: Yeah. But, I mean, there's a lot that I want to make. It's just one time, one step at a time.

Rosie Moosnick: Do you have a relationship with other bakers in town?

Sylviana Herrin: Yeah, we do. Martine Pastries is very close by here. We have a good relationship, and then also with the European Delight at Brannon Crossings. And I think those two are that we are known to each other. I don't know if there is any bakery in-- Magee's is already closed. But I didn't get to know the owner, but I know Martine, and also I know the owner of the Brennon Crossings or European Delight.

0:59:00

So I don't know of another bakery that's around here.

Sarah Jane Webb: Sunrise?

Sylviana Herrin: Sunrise Bakery--

Sarah Jane Webb: Are they still open?

Sylviana Herrin: --they only do wholesale right now. When I was in the farmers market, my daughter and my husband always come, and then we get breakfast there. And then they brought it to me when I was standing on my-- yeah, they have a really nice sandwich, eggs, and the cinnamon roll croissant, I remember the croissants. But now they, after COVID, they close the retail, but they still open just for wholesale.

Rosie Moosnick: Do you have a community of folks? Like, macaroons seem like this huge industry all of a sudden. Do you have a community of people outside of Lexington who are doing macarons in other communities and things?

Sylviana Herrin: Like outside Lexington?

Rosie Moosnick: Yeah.

Sylviana Herrin: I think like a lot of bigger city, they do a lot of macaroons.

1:00:01

I mean, there, to me, like, every time I go to a big city, like California, Chicago, macaroons is not as big anymore in there, actually, because it's already saturated. I feel like everywhere I go, they always have macarons everywhere [laughter]. While in here in Lexington or a smaller city, I still think that only three bakeries here in town that's selling macarons: Martine, one of the them, European Delight's selling macaroons, and then us. And I don't know if other places actually selling macaroons. So I think this is still beginning here. But in a different, in a bigger city, I think it's already pretty saturated. I think in the bigger city, I feel like they're known more. Like, they're famous more for their pastry, like their croissants or their kouign amann and their cruffins and things like that.

1:01:04

But when I started in 2013, that macaroons is pretty big in the big city, and nobody's here. When I selling at farmers market, nobody knows what they are. [Laughter] I have to give them sample for them to try in order for them to like, "Okay, this is good things to eat."

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: Otherwise nobody's going to want to try it because, "It's too pretty to eat. Like, what is this?" You know, like, "Oh, you just have to try it". And that's how I first, you know, it's too pretty for me to eat. But until I try it, then I fell in love. And I still fell in love making those. And I start teaching the macarons because I know how they can be so intimidating to make.

1:01:58

And then student, you know, is pretty happy with the class. They can go home, and then they can make it at home for themselves like in the smaller scale.

Rosie Moosnick: I just have, I think, one more question. In looking back, what would you have said to yourself at this point? What would you have said to yourself when you were starting out?

Sylviana Herrin: At this point?

Rosie Moosnick: Mm-hmm, looking back.

Sylviana Herrin: Looking back?

Rosie Moosnick: Mm-hmm.

Sylviana Herrin: I have no clue.

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: Honestly, I have no clue what I'm doing. I just, you know, like now I know about all of the business and, like, I didn't even have business plan. I don't know how to write all of that. I basically just based on my instinct, and I love doing this. I love macaroons. I know how to make them. I have my customer base.

1:03:00

Let's just do it. And I think that's part of me. I'm a risk-taker. And then I feel like I always follow my instinct. If I said, okay, it's feel good, let's do that. But I don't recommend it to [laughter] anybody who want to start a business, I think. I have a strong family support too when I start the business. So I have my husband, who has a steady job, that I know I have like a security if this didn't go well, it's not going to ruin, I mean, I'm going to still be able to live, because I have my family and my husband. And he's very supportive, even though he is like, "I don't think this is a good idea."

[Laughter]

"Like, you don't have any experience."

1:04:00

When I resigned from my work, I don't even think about opening a bakery. It just happened. And I just follow that, and I just feel like this is the way. Like, I'm just going to follow that passion, and then let's give it a try. That's why I start small. And then that's probably what I would tell everybody. I saw a lot of people coming to me and say, "Hey, I want to open a bakery. What do you suggest to me?" Like, start small. Start something small. Don't try to do a lot of things. In that way that you can focus on perfecting that product, and then you don't have too much stress. Keep the overhead low, keep the payroll low, and that you don't stress out. Try to create the sales and revenue, and then paying for the overhead. Find something unique that you know that you don't have to be working so hard to compete with the other bakeries.

1:05:02

And that's usually-- I think that will be my-- always my things to go. If I want to do the next product, what I'm going to do? Something unique, usually. That's what I'm telling any baker. Something unique that you cannot find it anywhere. Something origin that you cannot find anywhere. But if I'm looking back, like, I should have business plan. I should have this and that. But, I mean, it doesn't say that my business from the beginning to now has no obstacle. No. I had a lot of obstacle along the way. For example, I have to be forced to move out from my current space beyond my lease term. It was really hit me at the point when I was like, I give up, you know?

Rosie Moosnick: Was that when Kroger took over the--?

Sylviana Herrin: Yes, when my lease was up, you know, I have to move.

1:06:01

Rosie Moosnick: They bulldozed the building, did they?

Sylviana Herrin: Yeah. Well, the landlord was get the opportunity to rent it to Krogers, which, you know, it's hard to refuse [laughter] at that time. But it's not like the landlord's fault that they kicked me out; nothing like that. Everything is already in the papers that if this happened, I have to be able to accept that, and leave. I just didn't realize that that's actually [laughter] going to happen, you know, when I sign it. But we just have to be careful, you know, like when I sign the lease and things like that. But, anyway, it's hit me pretty bad because it's moved me backward, because all the investment that I put in that building is all basically just, you know, went away, and I have to start over again.

1:06:59

And at that point, I didn't know if I want to start over again or just this is it, I quit. But somehow I find the strength to keep pushing. And that's probably why that how growing up Indonesia helped me. Like, you know, you don't give up easily. Let's just keep pushing. What can you do?

What can you do to make it work in the next place? The obstacle is this bigger rent, bigger overhead. What can you do? Well, I already have a good team for macaroons. Why don't I come up with something else, and then help to overcome that overhead? And that's what I did, and thankfully it's work out. The landlord here is very supportive too, so that's really helpful, you know, having the really nice landlord, a really nice community in this area.

1:08:01

Everybody helping each other, and I just love this neighborhood here. But [laughter] looking back, I was like, man, that's a big risk.

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: But I feel, I just feel safe because I already have that experience in the farmers market. I don't recommend people just jumping into have a brick and mortar. I already have the online sales. I already have farmers market two years. So I already have that experience at least a little bit before I open a brick and mortar. So I think that the challenge is going to be triple if I don't have that to start with, and then just open the brick and mortar, 'cause then I will have to be really hard to try to make the sales, and then try to create the customer base.

1:08:59

It's going to be very challenging, I think.

Rosie Moosnick: Where do you see yourself in a decade?

Sylviana Herrin: Whew. Okay.

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: I want to keep expanding, as long as I have a really strong team. And I'm going to have to see how things works too with like with my family. I have one daughter right now. Either she's going to be involving in my business or not. I'm not going to force it to her. I want to make sure that if I'm expanding, I'm still going to have a really good balance with my family, because family is important to me too.

1:09:57

This is my second family, but I want to have a work balance between this and also with my family. So if I want to expanding more, I want to maybe not to open the second store, but what I'm saying expanding is is to offering more things, creating maybe more classes, things like that, more community involvement. Because I know that I like to be around people. My bakers like to be around people. By teaching classes, we share our knowledge to them. They bring home the goodies--

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: --at home. They're happy they can make it at home. And then that's like something that-- and we enjoy teaching them. When we teach, we're talking, we sharing knowledge, we talking about our kids.

[Laughter]

1:11:00

So that's kind of an enjoyment that I see. And then I want to try to pursue that as far as growing, make the space bigger for bigger events that we can cater more seating, things like that. I think as long as they're in one spot, I don't think I want to have so many different store, because that's going to take my focus to different places. And I don't think I want to do that way. I want to grow, expand bigger in one spot. That way, I feel I can control the balance between my team, my family, and my own home family. So it's pretty challenging sometimes.

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: It's very challenging.

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: I only have one daughter, and she already--

Rosie Moosnick: How old is she now?

Sylviana Herrin: She's 13.

1:11:54

So she's already like needing time with me, you know, teenager with their own life, try to understand their identity, have so many questions. I want to be there to be present for her. I want to be available for her whenever she needs me. And I don't want the business hinder me from doing that. 'Cause if that's going-- if that's happened, that's when I'm going to say, okay, I'm going to choose my family over my business. So in order for me to keep all balance, I have to make sure that I don't expand too fast. I want to grow steadily, and then adjust as I need. And then the same thing with my team members too. They also growing, right? They have families.

1:13:00

When they have younger kids, they can come. They only be able to come at 9 a.m. Now their kids is going to the college. "Oh, I can come in the morning, and that way I can leave early, and then I have the entire time." So they also change their schedule. So I want to grow together, and then I want them to grow their schedule together too, and then whatever works for them, for their family too, because they have their own family, and I have my own family. As long as everybody's happy--

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: --then we continue making it happen, and then keep growing. And I always talk to them, like, "If I want to expand, what do you think about this?" Because their opinions matters too. I want to make sure that you can support me that way, or this is a good idea, you know, things like that.

1:14:00

Rosie Moosnick: Is there anything else you wanted to ask?

Sarah Jane Webb: No, thank you.

Rosie Moosnick: Is there anything you want to add?

Sylviana Herrin: No. I just want to say thank you for this opportunity for this interview, and I just appreciate all your time taking pictures, Sarah, taking pictures yesterday. We really enjoy-- all the team is pretty excited yesterday.

[Laughter]

Sarah Jane Webb: Yeah, it was great to meet you--

Sylviana Herrin: I'm a little bit nervous for the interview today, so I hope that I answer all your questions.

Rosie Moosnick: You did, yeah.

Sylviana Herrin: Okay. But I really appreciate the opportunity that I have here in United States. I just-- I don't know. I honestly doesn't think that I will have this opportunity back in my country.

1:15:00

But here I got this opportunity, and I be able to do this. It's just sometimes it's a blessing for me to be able to have this, and be able to do this, and I'm very grateful for that. And so I'll try to be to doing my best to produce the best macaroons I can--

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: --for my customers, the best croissants that I can produce here, you know, to give back [laughter] to them for allow me to be able to do this. I'm enjoying this. I have work in the manufacturing industry, like an office job, 8 to 4 o'clock or 8 to 5. And in here, sometimes I have to come at 3 o'clock a.m., 4 a.m., you know, working in the farmers market in rain and in the sun, and bringing my daughter when she was little.

1:16:07

But I wouldn't trade this for the office job, I mean, this is just me, because I enjoy being with people. I enjoy moving, enjoying using my hand, the smell of the croissant when it's just come out from the oven. I mean, that is like the sense of the smell and everything when they make the

cheesecake. And it's just like, oh, that, it's just really make the happy place for me, and it's a happy place for all my bakers too.

Sarah Jane Webb: It shows.

Rosie Moosnick: It shows. It shows. I mean, as soon as you walk in, it shows, doesn't it?

Sarah Jane Webb: Absolutely.

Sylviana Herrin: And that's kind of environments that I didn't get it when I work in the office.

[Laughter]

Sylviana Herrin: I think that if I have to close this, that's probably what I miss the most, being around with my people [laughter] and the customer.

1:17:00

You know how one customer that always come, and we always forget to bring our sign out, every morning he will come and get the signs up [laughter] for us.

Rosie Moosnick: That's so sweet.

Sylviana Herrin: Yes, they are so sweet. My customer, we talk to them, regulars especially.

I just love this **informal**, I love this kind of-- that's the one that probably I'm going to miss the most, being with my people, being with my customer, you know. And that's how much different I compare that with working in the office job. Everything is just so tied up with their computer and everything like that. But, yeah, I just love my team.

Rosie Moosnick: It shows.

Sylviana Herrin: Thank you.

[Laughter]

Rosie Moosnick: It's beautiful. Thank you for taking this time. Let me just let this run for a couple seconds. They want the sounds or things.

Sylviana Herrin: Okay. Okay.

1:18:00

[End]