



Kayla Orr

Primitive Coffee Company

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Jessica Taylor: This is Jessica Taylor interviewing Kayla on May 23—24—

Kayla Orr: 24, I think, yeah. No, the 23.

Jessica Taylor: 23rd, okay, 2022. And can you tell me where you're from and how you got to Patrick County?

Kayla Orr: Yeah. It's a crazy story. So we're from Orlando, Florida, primarily. We lived there. I went to school there at UCF, and then my husband—that was his mom [referring to person working at the register of the establishment]—so we got married there and then we got a job offer to Charlotte, North Carolina in 2020 right before the pandemic. So we moved up there and then, of course, COVID happened and that whole mess. And we had a good friend pass away of cancer that November and so that really sucked. And then my grandma passed away, like, a week later. So for us that was a moment where—I just think the Lord uses tragedy like that sometimes to wake you up a little bit. And so for us we were moving up in these careers and we were doing really well at it, but it was a pretty stark contrast, our friend that passed away versus my grandma.

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And so we feel like we just kinda were led to make a decision to slow down our lives. So we started looking for a farm and we landed here just from Zillow. So we looked at, like, fifty properties, probably, all around North Carolina, Virginia, and just kind of landed here.

Jessica Taylor: What about here stuck out to you?

Kayla Orr: Honestly, the property was just a good price point. We didn't know anybody here at all, so we called Matt's parents and asked if they wanted to do a farm with us and they said yeah. So we all were just looking together for a place that was kind of still near a city, 'cause my family is in Florida so they fly up, but still rural. So for us it was like this was the best property we could find. It was still close to family in Charlotte, in Florida.

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And then, the funny thing is, is Meadows of Dan was the first area we drove through for the first property we looked at. And when we were driving through, I said to my husband, "This would be the cutest area for a little coffee shop." And we looked at, I'm not kidding, like, forty more properties after that. And so, when we bought our property, we didn't even know it was near this town. So we ended up just taking the parkway one day and we ended up here again. And we were, like, "What the heck? We've been here." And then, there was a for rent sign here, and so we just got the information and that was kind of it.

Jessica Taylor: Wow! What were you doing in Florida and Charlotte before this?

Kayla Orr: We did insurance sales.

Jessica Taylor: Okay.

Kayla Orr: So health insurance. We were with UnitedHealthcare.

Jessica Taylor: Okay.

Kayla Orr: So no farming. [Laughter]

Jessica Taylor: No. And where is your husband's family from, then?

Kayla Orr: Orlando, as well.

Jessica Taylor: Oh, okay. So did they move up with you then?

Kayla Orr: Yeah, um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. Incredible.

Kayla Orr: Yeah.

Jessica Taylor: Where did you get your start baking?

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Kayla Orr: So baking, my mom's always baked and my grandmom was a big baker. So growing up, that was something we had always done, just Christmas cookies, and I think every single week my mom has some baked good on the counter. So that's how I grew up doing that. And then I learned at—we worked at a barbecue restaurant in college, me and my husband did, but we were just friends at the time, but we worked at the same one, and they had a bakery in it. And so I applied in college to work there primarily at the bakery 'cause I wanted to learn that in like a commercial setting more. And so I worked there for, like, two years, I think, and then got to go overseas and stuff and learn different bakeries and stuff, too.

Jessica Taylor: And the barbecue-bakery place, was that a chain? Was that—

Kayla Orr: No, it's family owned. It's called 4 Rivers, so it's in Orlando, Florida. They have, like, sixteen stores now, I think, across Florida. So it's pretty big.

Jessica Taylor: Okay.

Kayla Orr: But, yeah, they have a commercial centralized bakery and then they also have bakeries within the smokehouses.

Jessica Taylor: Hmm. And the overseas piece, how did that happen?

Kayla Orr: So I was taking an international marketing class and I had this dream of starting a bakery that worked with human trafficking efforts.

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And so I was taking this class to kind of learn more about international business and this lady approached me, her name's Connie [sp], about a mission trip to go overseas and learn baking that helped get women out of human trafficking. So she didn't even know I was working on this project or anything. And so that was a crazy story because it was, like, so specific. And so, yeah, I went. I had gone over there. I go to Asia, so I've been over there, like, three times, I think, and just worked with them and kind of learned that side.

Jessica Taylor: In learning that side, what was that like? What did you have to adapt to?

Kayla Orr: Nothing really. Baking is pretty universal, honestly. It's different recipes but it's kind of cool 'cause it's like a common language, I mean, food across the world is. So it's like you don't even understand each other but you're baking together.

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So yeah, I learned a lot. I mostly was learning about human trafficking, so baking was just like the tool to help these women get out of that.

Jessica Taylor: And how did you get involved specifically in the human trafficking component?

Kayla Orr: I think it was my freshman year of college. I had gotten saved when I was eighteen, so my senior year of high school. And I went to this conference my freshman year of college called Passion. It's in Atlanta, Georgia. It's this huge—I think it's, like, sixty thousand students that go. So it's huge. But anyways, that's the first time I heard about human trafficking. And I didn't really have things that I was that broken for before. It sounds horrible but kids or homelessness or—they're really important causes and people care a lot about those, and animals, but they didn't just, like, break my heart. And when I heard about human trafficking it was just like the worse thing I've ever heard in my life.

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So I got involved with—they were called Florida Abolitionist at the time in Orlando, and they've now been picked up by the US for United Abolitionists and so it's America's lead human trafficking taskforce, basically. And so I interned with them and worked with them for almost ten years, probably. So I just learned a lot through them with it and did a lot of overseas trips with it.

Jessica Taylor: And then, getting back to the baking part, before we figure out how those come together, what kind of stuff did your mother make and your grandmother make?

Kayla Orr: Mostly cookies.

Jessica Taylor: Cookies?

Kayla Orr: Yeah, um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: What kind of cookies?

Kayla Orr: She makes these ones called apricot jewels, which I'll bring out Christmas this year 'cause they are so good. A little secret recipe. But that, and then, she makes a lot of brownies, a lot of bars, all different types of bars. That's mostly it, I feel like. Pound cakes. Oh, pies.

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Kind of like more old school. Not like cupcakes or donuts or anything like that.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. Is it the same as what your grandmother would make?

Kayla Orr: What?

Jessica Taylor: What your mother would make.

Kayla Orr: Oh, yeah. Yeah. My mom was a little more like Rice Krispie treats or a little more that kind of way, but yeah.

Jessica Taylor: And what was it like learning from them?

Kayla Orr: It's good. Yeah, it was some of my favorite memories. When my grandma passed away, I took a lot of her baking stuff. So some of our favorite memories, I think, as a family were coming around and doing something like that.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. And was it seasonal at all or . . . ?

Kayla Orr: Yeah. There's always, again, something sweet always. But I would say our involvement in it as kids was mostly around holidays, like Thanksgiving and Christmas, that kind of thing.

Jessica Taylor: What was their teaching style?

Kayla Orr: Hands-on for sure. You're, like, eating the cookie dough as you're baking. So it was super fun. Everything was bright colored for Christmas cookies.

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I wouldn't say it was very put-together necessarily. Like, not commercial baking. So I would say it was more home baking. Just, like, more sprinkles the better, like, who cares kind of thing.

Jessica Taylor: And when did you decide that baking would be a part of your identity either career wise or as a person?

Kayla Orr: Yeah. I wouldn't even say it's a part of my identity. I would just say it was like a hobby. Through college my roommates would call me Betty Crocker 'cause I would just bake and try new things. Especially working in the bakery I learned technical skills then, so I was always trying things out at the house and stuff. So yeah, I still wouldn't even say it's my identity, honestly. It's something that I think is like a creative outlet, but I wouldn't say it's, like, who I am necessarily at all.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. As a creative outlet, what kind of experimentation did you do in college and then later on?

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Kayla Orr: So college was mostly like cakes. It was mostly like learning how to bake on a massive scale 'cause I think—oh, my gosh, I don't even know. So I did catering with them, and I did smokehouse and thousands of people came through a day. It was huge, huge, huge. So you had to learn how to crank out recipes on a bulk scale. But I think what I appreciate about them is they didn't lose consistency at all. And so that was really cool, finding those crafts there. What was your question again? I got off topic.

Jessica Taylor: It was about experimentation.

Kayla Orr: Oh. I think since moving out here I'm more interested in savory things. So breads, sourdough. I don't like very sweet things so even though I would make it I wouldn't necessarily eat a lot of it. So I'm more interested right now in using fruits and foods we're growing in our garden into baking, which is probably more old school, I think, than modern baking.

Jessica Taylor: And you experiment mostly at home?

Kayla Orr: Um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: Can you talk a little bit about that process?

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Kayla Orr: Yeah. So we have a garden so I will grow all my herbs and stuff there. And then I infuse them in our syrups here, too. So there's a lot of crossover between—it's almost like cooking in a way because it's like flavor profiles. And so my husband's a phenomenal cook and so that helps out a lot too. So we do that and then, since moving out here, I've just learned more

about bread. People are pretty into bread out here and so I've been experimenting with sourdough starters and my own bread recipes.

Jessica Taylor: So you're developing the bread recipes at home?

Kayla Orr: Yeah, um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: What kind of breads have you found successful or found unsuccessful?

Kayla Orr: None successful yet. [Laughter] But everyone just says that's how breads are, so zero. Oh, biscuits. I've done biscuits really well.

Jessica Taylor: Oh, really?

Kayla Orr: Biscuits, yeah. That's it.

Jessica Taylor: How did you discover that?

Kayla Orr: I just failed a lot. So the dogs were very happy. [Laughter]

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Jessica Taylor: So did you develop your own recipe with that?

Kayla Orr: Um-hm, yeah.

Jessica Taylor: Okay.

Kayla Orr: Biscuits are pretty standard, honestly. Most baking is the same pretty much, honestly. And then you kind of, like, change a few ingredients here and there. But as far as the technical skills, it just takes so much time to get those. So I think that's what's hard about baking, is you just have to put in the time and practice it to get it.

Jessica Taylor: And you said you got the technical skills, at least in terms of scale, from your—

Kayla Orr: Yeah, 4 Rivers.

Jessica Taylor: Specifically, what kind of scaling up skills did you get from that?

Kayla Orr: When I was with them, they were, like, two smokehouses maybe, and I stayed with them till they were, like, fourteen smokehouses. And then they started catering commercial kitchen with baking. So being around that. And then I worked on the other side of sales. So I was with, like, corporate events, weddings, putting in the orders, and then making sure logistics kind of lined up all around.

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And then, staffing and all that kind of stuff.

Jessica Taylor: With the technical pieces of baking you were using a commercial kitchen, right?

Kayla Orr: Um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: What was learning about a commercial kitchen like?

Kayla Orr: Like, in regards to did I learn something from it or . . . ?

Jessica Taylor: Yeah. What were some of the struggles that were different from cooking at home?

Kayla Orr: Probably just, like, health codes, honestly. They're so strict about health codes, which they should be when you're baking for the public. But I think it's probably that side 'cause it's, like, everything has to be measured by weight where at home you can throw in whatever you want. But when you're cooking for the public, you can't charge two dollars for a brownie and it be half a pound off from the other one or quarter pound, whatever. It has to be the same weight, basically, every single baked good, to make it fair for the consumer.

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So I think the technicalities on that side was new.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. And with that, did you notice that customers influenced what you were baking?

Kayla Orr: There it was pretty centralized. I think they kind of do the same thing all the time. It's like they've already honed in on the favorites, basically. And then, for catering what was fun is you could put in custom things. But as far as the smokehouses go it was pretty much the same thing. They would rotate a few things seasonally. I think what I've had fun with here is having an idea and just being able to crank it out. But there when you're doing something on so massive of a scale you can't really do that as much, honestly.

Jessica Taylor: How is what you bake for here different than how you bake at home for yourself and for your family?

Kayla Orr: It's the same. There's no different, unh-uh.

Jessica Taylor: Okay.

Kayla Orr: No. My kind of mindset is what I serve here is what I would eat. So there's a few things here that I'm not a huge, huge fan of.

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If something's really sweet like cinnamon rolls, I just don't gravitate towards it that much. I'm not a huge scone person but people love scones. So there's a few scones I like but not a ton. So my scones are not like biscuit either, they're cakey more. So I try to do things that I still would eat if I wanted it, but I would say I'm more like—I love bagels, I love that kind of stuff more. But the bagels here are baked by Big Indian, which is a really good baker local.

Jessica Taylor: That was going to be my next question, is about how other bakers in the area influence you. You mentioned bread specifically there.

Kayla Orr: Yeah. I would say Adrienne's inspired me a lot. I've never visited her place yet, but I hope to because what she's doing is amazing.

Jessica Taylor: And this is Big Indian that you're talking about?

Kayla Orr: Um-hm, yeah. They're really good.

Jessica Taylor: Why would you describe what they're doing as amazing?

Kayla Orr: I just think their quality. I've ordered enough from them to know her technical skills are really good.

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Jessica Taylor: Okay.

Kayla Orr: And so it's like I have a lot of people that approach me that want to bake here but, again, when you're serving to the public it just has to be a certain way. I think what I want here is it has to be same sizes. Those things just matter because when I'm behind the counter and somebody says they want the bigger one, it's just one extra step. That's like, if it was all the same you don't have to deal with that. And then, ingredients. I know she's using really clean ingredients and we care a lot about that. And so a lot of people will cut corners 'cause costs are higher, which I get, but we're not willing to compromise quality at all. So I would say she's encouraged me the most in that aspect with her sticking to her quality throughout all these changes with everything.

Jessica Taylor: In terms of what other bakers in the area are baking, seasonally or just what you've seen, how has that influenced you either as the business owner or as a baker yourself?

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Kayla Orr: I think there's a lot of native things growing here that I've never really heard of. And so a lot of people that come in are herbalists, I guess is what they'd say, so I'm learning a lot, and I can't even spit them off to you, but about native Appalachia plants. And so I think that would be cool one day to start incorporating more in baked goods.

Jessica Taylor: And you said that you have a lot of people who come, and they want to vend. And I notice that you also have a lot of local stuff in the actual store.

Kayla Orr: Um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: So what is your relationship like with other vendors?

Kayla Orr: Oh, it's so good. They're awesome. The biggest thing with people is we don't want fifty of the same thing in here. And then, it's getting to know them. If they're really, really awesome people that's really great 'cause they get a lot of business, too, just on the side.

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And we want to be able to refer people out that we know are going to be really good people to our customers, too, so that's important. And then, they're just all licensed and certified.

[Laughter] That's just the biggest thing [0:17:13 **with shops**] 'cause you used to be able to pop up and sell, but we're liable for that if someone gets sick when it's in our store so they just have to be licensed and cooking out of a catering kitchen.

Jessica Taylor: And would you say that most of it is local?

Kayla Orr: Yeah. In our store?

Jessica Taylor: Yeah.

Kayla Orr: Yeah. Yeah. I would say, like, eighty, eighty-five percent is local.

Jessica Taylor: And for this region how would you define local? At what point does it stop being—

Kayla Orr: I would say, like, hyper-local then. It's here in the county.

Jessica Taylor: Okay.

Kayla Orr: Yeah. Either Floyd County, Carroll County, or Patrick County. So all within an hour of here.

Jessica Taylor: You also had a farmers market outside. Can you talk a little bit about that process?

Kayla Orr: Yeah.

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So we had equipment issues when we got this place and so we weren't able to open until October, but we got in here, like, June and started working on the building and stuff. And so we started applying to farmers markets, but everyone was just already full. And we were like, well, we'll just start our own. So we started our own one up here. There's never been one up here before. And so we just got together with some people we met and then started spreading on social media about the market. And then it's cool 'cause it's a lot of people. I'd say the majority are, like, forty and under farmers. And so that's cool 'cause I think there's this perception that younger people—this industry is gonna die out, but we actually see this huge wave of younger people getting into this, which is really cool.

Jessica Taylor: Why do you think that is in this specific area?

Kayla Orr: I don't think it is just this area, though.

Jessica Taylor: Right.

Kayla Orr: I think COVID shifted a lot of things. I think with all the issues that we're having with supply chains it's like some of them might be legit, some of them make zero sense.

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I think last year there was a chicken wing shortage and everyone thought it was farmers but I learned being in a farm community now there's no issues with production. It's supply chain issues. And so I think people are learning that food is not meant to be on a massive scale like this, and it's good to know who's growing what and to learn how to grow your own stuff. I think we're only probably the second generation that's been removed from our food like we are. So I don't know, I think it's this shift of the chaos that's happening in the world, it's, like, we should at least know how to provide for ourselves in some way.

Jessica Taylor: And what drew you and your family specifically to farming?

Kayla Orr: That's more a Matt question. He's always wanted to do it. I'm not sure.

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He wanted to start out with bison and so I think he read a book by Patagonia and that influenced—it was, like, *Let People Go Surfing* or something like that, and I think that influenced him of being able to work still but enjoy being outside. I think the rest of the world makes fun of America because all we do is work. And it's just not necessarily normal when you go to other cultures. And so I think he got inspired just reading that kind of book where it's, like, here's a successful company that still values hobbies and time with family and things like that. So I have no clue. He just got into it and started researching it and so we just talked about it when our friend died and we made the decision in, like, a month. It was super quick.

Jessica Taylor: Wow. And your role on the farm is primarily vegetables and herbs?

Kayla Orr: No. So my role is support. [Laughter]

Jessica Taylor: Okay. [Laughter]

Kayla Orr: No. I can't do this and the farm. So at first, I was trying, and I was dying.

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So he does the farm, and his dad helps him a lot, and then we have another guy out there that's helping, Luke. So they're doing that and then we all pitch in and help out with things here and there, but I wouldn't say we're responsible for it necessarily. So me and his mom do the bakery and coffee shop.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. So the vegetables and herbs go into the baked goods, at least some of them do?

Kayla Orr: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And we sell our meat and produce here, as well.

Jessica Taylor: Do the baked goods influence what you grow or is it sort of incidental?

Kayla Orr: I think it's both. Yeah, it's like simultaneous. It's like what we grow—'cause sometimes an herb dies or something so then you can't use it. So I think the flavor profiles come in. So soon I'm going to start doing some more watermelon stuff, berry stuff. We have our teas like that, so start shifting more towards fruity things coming up.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. And that's another piece of, like, this area has these festivals that are organized around—the apple festival, the strawberry festival.

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Kayla Orr: Yeah, it's cool.

Jessica Taylor: How has that influenced what you do? And I know that you are trying to be more involved in those kinds of things.

Kayla Orr: Yeah. Next year we hope to get out to them more, but since it's my first year here still I just want to learn them and kind of see what they're about and spectate at them a little bit more. And last year we bought locally, so Wade's Apple Orchards right up the road from our farm. And so we went and got some apples from them and used them in all of our baked goods all fall. We try to source local things that we're not growing ourselves.

Jessica Taylor: For the apple period of the year what kinds of baked good are you doing?

Kayla Orr: I do some really good apple bread, which I actually still have some. We've been baking some 'cause it's pretty popular year-round. But in the fall, I call it Wade's Apple Orchard Bread or something like that. So we try to direct traffic to go to people out there, too.

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Jessica Taylor: Do you have a specific recipe that you use that you formulated for this?

Kayla Orr: Um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. So you made the recipe for it?

Kayla Orr: Yeah.

Jessica Taylor: Can you tell me a little bit about it?

Kayla Orr: Yeah.

Jessica Taylor: You don't have to tell me the secret or anything.

Kayla Orr: I think it's just good ingredients. So we're using a local flour now, as well. It's water milled so it's grown right up the road from us and then it's shipped to their water mill and they're pressing it and stuff. So that's making a difference. And then, the apples are just right off the tree. And then, lots of cinnamon.

Jessica Taylor: You mentioned you're working with a local miller?

Kayla Orr: Um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: Which miller are you working with?

Kayla Orr: Deep Roots.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. And how did you develop relationships with Wade's, for example, or with Deep Roots?

Kayla Orr: Wade's we pass all the time. It's right on our way to Floyd so we just stopped. And then, Deep Roots, I found them online because we're having issues with flour and stuff. And so, when all this Ukraine stuff happened, I started seeing all these price hikes everywhere and so then I started questioning, like, why are we shipping our grains?

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Wouldn't that cost more to ship grain across an ocean when we grow it here in the United States? And so then I started looking, like, are there any local people doing grain? And then I found them.

Jessica Taylor: I'm trying to think of how to ask this and I think it was influenced by the conversation I heard out there.

Kayla Orr: Um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: And also at the strawberry festival there are all these political conversations about supply lines. Is that something that affects you? I'm sure it does.

Kayla Orr: Yeah. Anyone that has their own company gets affected by that for sure.

Jessica Taylor: Okay.

Kayla Orr: Yeah. And that's why it's interesting when people make jokes about the gas prices and they're, like, well, just take an Uber or take a train. It's, like, well, you're not understanding that our tractors only take diesel so when diesel goes up to six dollars a gallon it's just not that simple.

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So, yeah, I think there's a lot of naiveness from people that have never been around anything agricultural to not understand that these little shifts here and there, they don't affect you in the city at all really. You don't even notice them. But when you're removed from that it affects everything. 'Cause shipping costs are higher, and anything is gonna be a lot more expensive.

Jessica Taylor: Is that reflected in the conversations that you have in Meadows of Dan or Stuart with other people that live here?

Kayla Orr: Yeah. I think it's nationwide, though. I have friends everywhere that own their own companies and it's across the board that—it's ridiculous what's happening, honestly. Something's not adding up. It doesn't make sense.

Jessica Taylor: Since COVID happened, the supply chain issues that affect you directly financially, has that changed how you identify politically or changed your thinking about things?

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Kayla Orr: I think it's just made me question more things, honestly. I think during COVID you saw this huge shutdown. If you had questions about anything, like, how dare you ask a question. It didn't even matter what side you were on, anything. It's like no one was allowed to ask questions about anything. And then, all the BLM stuff, you couldn't ask questions. And so to me I will always encourage somebody to ask questions. I don't really even care where you land on or what your stance is or anything. You should be able to have a conversation with somebody and even if you disagree it's not your identity. Who cares? It's fine. Agree to disagree.

[Laughter] It's totally fine.

Jessica Taylor: How have you seen those kinds of issues affect this area, COVID . . . ?

Kayla Orr: I wasn't here for it so I can't answer that.

Jessica Taylor: Yeah.

Kayla Orr: I have no clue.

Jessica Taylor: Okay.

Kayla Orr: I know that they were the busiest they've ever been during COVID out here.

Jessica Taylor: Really?

Kayla Orr: Yeah. So I feel like, if anything, I feel more secure being somewhere like this if something like that happened again, 'cause people get out of concentrated areas when things happen like that.

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Jessica Taylor: Yeah, absolutely. Can you talk me through a typical day here?

Kayla Orr: At the coffee shop?

Jessica Taylor: Um-hm.

Kayla Orr: I get here and set up everything. I would say most of our job here is talking to people, to be honest. We make coffee and we make teas and we're giving people baked goods, but I think the coolest thing is we get to know people and hear about their lives. And we've had people coming in after they've had a death in their family. We've had people come in with great things. It's like we actually know our customers beyond just their coffee order. So even the staff we just hired, that's what I've been talking with them about: your job here is to connect with people and get to know them and be present with them. And there's a way to still do that when we're really busy.

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It doesn't happen as much, honestly, but days when we have regulars mostly—I think people are shocked that we mostly have regulars, but that's what you want as a company. So yeah, that's kind of really it. It's like different people come in and we talk with them, and some people are from Belgium and—I don't know, they're from all over, too, which is really cool.

Jessica Taylor: Are there encounters that stick out to you, particularly with regulars?

Kayla Orr: Like, conversations or people?

Jessica Taylor: Or people, yeah. Without being the first and last name, specific.

[Laughter]

Kayla Orr: Yeah. [Laughter] There's a few. We definitely have a group that I always really, really love and so they come in a lot, and they ask about our lives. And we also feel like within this group we can be open. So if something happened bad that day or whatever it's like a transparency on both sides that we can have, which is cool.

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Jessica Taylor: That is really amazing. And how are you seeing customers—you said they're from all over—

Kayla Orr: Um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: But have you seen seasonal changes in who comes in?

Kayla Orr: Actually, yeah, 'cause we opened in the fall so all we've known is who we've known in that time. And recently we're having people come in that are coming up from down south and then they live up here during the summer and fall, and they go back to Florida for winter. So we're meeting a new wave of people coming up, yeah.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. And do they respond to the baked goods or the coffee differently than maybe regulars do, more like year-round locals?

Kayla Orr: People are shocked it's good, I think, 'cause they don't expect a good coffee shop in a tiny town. [Laughter] That's funny to me. And you also have some people that don't think it's good 'cause they're used to this thick, black—I don't know.

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One lady told me that she's used other coffee being like mud, which is not my preference at all. So we try to accommodate both here. We do just a black cup of coffee and there's nothing in it, it's a dark roast. And that hits that crowd pretty hard, so there's definitely a crowd—but then you're shocked—I have this farmer come in and he gets a caramel latte and his first time coming in got a pumpkin spice cold brew with whipped foam on it. So, I don't know, I've misjudged, too. [Laughter]

Jessica Taylor: That's really fun.

Kayla Orr: It's really funny.

Jessica Taylor: One obvious question I wanted to ask you was, why coffee? And why a storefront rather than doing the farmers markets, doing the festivals, or do something that's more mobile?

Kayla Orr: I think 'cause of the farm, honestly. We were trying to think of what's a consistent way to provide produce and baked goods.

0:31:01

And you're not going to get an experience like a market like you're gonna get every day here in a coffee shop. So the connections we've made and the community that's been fostered here—we

have a book club that meets every month now and they're hanging out outside the coffee shop. And none of them really knew each other till that book club. So it's the community that's happening and happens in a café, you just don't get that just doing markets. So I think our hearts have always been about community and connections and culture, and so I think that was a lot of our heart was wanting to start something like this.

Jessica Taylor: Yeah, a hundred percent. I also learned that the woman that owns this building—

Kayla Orr: Felecia.

Jessica Taylor: Felecia owns a lot of the other buildings in the area. What is that story? I heard that she started with a vegetable stand. Do you know about that?

Kayla Orr: Yeah, I know bits and pieces of it. She started with that.

0:32:00

I think she was a single mom. I think she was pretty young, too, like twenties. Yeah, and she just started her own produce stand. I don't know if she was growing it or she was connecting with farmers, and then eventually she was working at the building, I think, and then I think she bought it. And now it's her and her daughter, Casey, and then her husband, Tim. And they've just bought buildings and started companies in the town. But the cool thing I think is their heart is for the community. Even bringing us here, they sell coffee across the street, but she wanted to see a café here really bad for the community to have a place for people to come and rest. So it's like her heart is to see this area really thrive. And she's willing to invest and help other people step in even if it cuts a little bit of her profits down at her stores, which is cool.

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Jessica Taylor: So you all have really connected?

Kayla Orr: She's awesome, yeah.

Jessica Taylor: That's cool.

Kayla Orr: Yeah, she's really cool. She's really inspiring.

Jessica Taylor: Well, that was kind of part of my next question, which is accidentally it happened that most of the people that we're interviewing are women and primarily younger women that are starting their own businesses as side hustles or main hustles.

Kayla Orr: Um-hm. [inaudible 0:33:22] these other bakers, these side-hustle bakers?

Jessica Taylor: Yeah, absolutely. [Laughter] Why do you think that is, especially in this area?

Kayla Orr: I can't answer that. I have no clue. I feel like I'm too new still to know. I have enough of a grasp to talk about some things about the area, but I think some questions like that you only know from being here a long time. So I don't even think I can speak to that at all because I have no clue.

Jessica Taylor: Can you speak to your own thoughts about that as a woman yourself?

Kayla Orr: I don't know. 'Cause I'm seeing the opposite, too.

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I'm seeing women saying, no, I'm feeling called to help my family and be with my kids, and they're saying no to their corporate jobs and they're saying no to this pressure to side hustle. So I feel like I'm experiencing the other shift right now, which is interesting, where I'm just seeing this emphasis put on, you can't do it all, you don't have to do it all. And it doesn't feel like a sacrifice to them to not be the VP of this company. They know they could do it, but they feel more called to be with their family or invest in their children or—I don't know. So I'm seeing a different shift right now, I think, honestly.

Jessica Taylor: How does that jibe with your conversation with your husband about rest and having time for hobbies and living a slower life?

Kayla Orr: He's definitely that. I'm more of the go, go, go, work, work, work person.

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So I think he pulls me a lot that way which is good for me, I think. 'Cause it's just, again, there's no point in working if you didn't enjoy it. I mean, you die, right, and you don't take your job with you. [Laughter]

Jessica Taylor: Yeah. [Laughter]

Kayla Orr: It sounds morbid but when you see it, it puts it in perspective more where you're, like—people are the only thing that matters. Nothing else literally matters in this world at all, it's just people.

Jessica Taylor: Wow. You've mentioned your faith briefly and I wanted to see if—and maybe this is a wild question, but I wanted to see if there were any intersections between baking and community and your faith?

Kayla Orr: I think it's—yeah. When you talk about identity, that's it. That's my identity is who I am in the Lord and what He's doing. And I think it's a struggle every day to learn what He is desiring for me but the more I lean into that the more freedom I'm finding.

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And it's way more fun 'cause we would've never done this on our own without some type of prompting or feeling that this is what the Lord wants us to do. So yeah, He's just provided for us so much that it's, like, why would He stop doing that? So yeah, I would say that's more pivotal to who we are and what we're doing is we feel called to love people and love them well. And a space like this provides people of all different backgrounds and thoughts and opinions to connect and have conversation and ultimately just feel loved and heard.

Jessica Taylor: I also just wanted to ask some questions about what you've noticed in the community. I understand that you're new.

0:36:58

How would you describe the food scene here generally? Are there foods that you encountered that were unfamiliar to you even from a commercial kitchen in Florida?

Kayla Orr: Not unfamiliar 'cause my dad's from Mississippi and that's country. It's like a Cajun—it's, like, rednecky more than here. So I feel like a lot of the foods I've heard here I've

heard of before or seen. I'm pretty happy Pickle & Ash is here. I love their food style and growing foods. And we just started providing them with chicken there, as well. So they're very about community too, and wanting to partner with local people doing things, and so they've been a really good similar kind of mindset that we've found in the area. And then, Longfin Grill— have you eaten there yet?

Jessica Taylor: Unh-uh.

Kayla Orr: It's so good. It's like a seafood food truck right up the road. That's super good. Jane's has good chicken tenders.

0:37:57

So it's a lot of that country cooking, which that's been a little more newer for me 'cause I'm used to Orlando or Charlotte where you could get good Cuban food and authentic Mexican food and sushi whenever you want. So I miss that diversity a hundred percent, but that's just what they eat out here. Most people grow it or cook it.

Jessica Taylor: How have you seen, or have you seen the history of Patrick County playing into—or the history of the area generally playing into food or how the food is presented?

Kayla Orr: I don't know if I've explored that yet, actually. It's a good question.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. That's even helpful.

Kayla Orr: Yeah. It's a super good question. I don't know if I've spent time researching other—beyond customers coming in and talking to me about native plants growing and different things they're doing in their gardens.

0:38:59

Almost everyone here has a garden, which is cool. I don't care if they're ninety or a hundred and five, they have a little garden. [Laughter]

Jessica Taylor: So you're learning about the native plants from customers?

Kayla Orr: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jessica Taylor: Hmm. And what are they talking about in terms of gardening?

Kayla Orr: Oh, a lot of them talk about things that have just grown here for a long time. So some of them are not even gardening, they're just perennial things that grow. And some of them have orchards or—they're planting avocado trees. They're doing everything here.

Jessica Taylor: Wow. We got off topic a little bit on this, so I wanted to return to it. Can you talk me through a typical day when you bake? Do you bake here?

Kayla Orr: No. So we couldn't get approved to do a kitchen here which sucks, so originally this was going to be a kitchen, this back space. But we're only renting this space and to bring it to code—it's never been a restaurant before—it was probably a hundred thousand.

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And so that's just a dumb business move to sink that into a rental unit, so we weren't gonna do that. So we did get approved to do home cooking and baking, so we just do it in our kitchen at our house. But we are building out a commercial kitchen in our barn 'cause we're using it for processing already for our animals. And so we're hoping part of that will be baking, too. So I'm hoping at that point maybe that's when I can hire somebody to help bake at the farm. And we

want to do events and stuff at the farm so there'll be a lot of crossover with that. But until we get to that point, I'm just the one baking at the house.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. Do you do your baking at night after work or in the morning?

Kayla Orr: **[Oh, my gosh 0:40:43]** right now, yeah, both. [Laughter]

Jessica Taylor: Okay. [Laughter]

Kayla Orr: Yeah. I started out doing everything and I died so fast. So that was the one element that's, like, I have to outsource this. I don't have the margin to be here and connect with customers. And I would say that's probably my heart more than the baking, is connecting with people and getting to know them.

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And I love seeing someone bring their mom in and they sit down and they're here for an hour hanging out. So it's, like, those moments you just don't get when you're back in the kitchen. So yeah, that's why I was happy to find Adrienne and them agree to wholesale with us because there's no way we could've done this with the original thought process. It was too overambitious.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. Your kitchen at home, can you kind of describe your setup in terms of the oven and the pots and pans you use, even things like mixers?

Kayla Orr: It's just, like, normal stuff, honestly, like KitchenAid. All your stuff is just for baking so you can't mix it with anything else. And our oven—what sucks is we have a 1960s

ranch home still and we haven't upgraded the kitchen yet, so my oven is—you're gonna
[inaudible 0:41:59]—I think it's as wide as that toaster oven.

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I'm not kidding.

Jessica Taylor: [Laughter]

Kayla Orr: So what also sucks so bad is when I bake cookies I can do, like, six at a time. And
so where other bakers that have the big units are doing—we used to do forty at a time at work.
So it's, like, I cannot wait for that dream to get that in there, but it's humble beginnings.

[Laughter]

Jessica Taylor: So did you have to buy—

Kayla Orr: Special things to fit in there? A hundred percent. [Laughter]

Jessica Taylor: Yeah. Okay. Oh, wow.

Kayla Orr: Almost basically like toaster oven-size pans.

Jessica Taylor: So how much time do you spend when you have to?

Kayla Orr: Baking?

Jessica Taylor: Yeah.

Kayla Orr: I normally crank out probably at least a whole day a week.

Jessica Taylor: Okay.

Kayla Orr: So, like, eight to nine hours, so not as much as people probably think, 'cause I try to do things that are a little more efficient like bars or cookies or bread loaves and stuff like that.

Jessica Taylor: And what is the hope for the barn if you wanted to do a more commercial kitchen there?

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Kayla Orr: Yeah. So the hope with that is that's separate from my house so if we ever have kids or anything we don't have staff in our home. And it already will be like an approved kitchen with USDA and everything so that should be fine there, and so that way I can just hire somebody, and they can show up. I don't even care if they have a kid. It can be a mom and she can bring her kid—who cares—and you can bake and make some money still with your family. And then, we want to put a farm store on the farm where people can drive up and get stuff like that. And we already have people that run in and out for different things and so we're hoping to be able to provide them with fresh food for their events or their stay of a night or something like that.

Jessica Taylor: With a commercial kitchen you would obviously bake for events and things like that.

Kayla Orr: Um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: Would you expand that further beyond supplying the store and supplying events?

Kayla Orr: We've been doing it already, yeah.

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So we did a catering event that morning you guys came, which is why I was going crazy, too, 'cause we had that. And then we got so busy right in the morning, and I had two new staff. But anyway, so yeah, we do do that. So if people want a catering event order, we can do that ahead of time. We can't accommodate things within a few days right now, though. So I think that's probably what would shift is we probably could do some more last-minute things.

Jessica Taylor: In terms of what you bake now versus what you'd like to bake, would you like to see that change in any way?

Kayla Orr: Yeah. I want to do cakes, as well. I'm an artist so I like decorating and stuff. So I would love to see us do birthday cakes beyond what you can get at the grocery store, cool ones. So I would like to shift into something like that soon.

Jessica Taylor: You mentioned the grocery store and that's really interesting. That's something that's come up a couple of times in terms of the quality of ingredients and things like that.

Kayla Orr: Um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: How is what home bakers offer or small bakers offer different from what you get at the grocery store here?

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Kayla Orr: I haven't looked at their stuff enough to know. Again, I feel like I'm probably the worst baker 'cause I don't buy baked goods that much when I'm out. I love Chelsea's at Pickle

& Ash, so I'll buy her stuff, but I don't buy baked goods that much, especially just to take home. I'm not just snacking on sweet things ever. I like sweet drinks but not food. But I think America in general is, like, cupcakes, tons of frosting, just overly sweet. And so I think that that got commercialized. When you watch Netflix and stuff, all these cooking, baking shows, other than British baking, which is my favorite, the other ones are all the same things. So I think that's why I like shows like British baking and when I've traveled, I've gone to so many bakeries in Europe and always try to see what they're doing. And there's such a difference in, I think, being slower-paced, honestly.

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And you're not trying to create something that has a two-week shelf life versus something that's really good that you would probably eat yourself and just bring home to your family if doesn't sell that day. So, I don't know, I think that's probably the difference is it's still efficient but it's not maybe always the most profitable item, if that makes sense.

Jessica Taylor: Yes, absolutely. And you have also been an organizer of events a lot. Can you describe how you became that kind of a leader?

Kayla Orr: I don't even know, honestly. Maybe my senior year I was class president and that forced me to learn that kind of stuff, organizing people and doing all the events that year like homecoming or whatever. And I played sports and I think playing within any type of team sport like that you just have to learn how to work together.

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And I'm the oldest of four kids so that probably helped, too. [Laughter] I don't know. I've always just kind of gravitated towards that stuff, though.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. What do you hope for the future of events and public life in Patrick County?

Kayla Orr: I don't think I could ask for more, honestly. I think I've been shocked, 'cause I feel like in the cities when you go to an event there's fifty options, right? So it's really hard to get anyone's attention at all. And it's, like, you have to be the best with whatever people perceive as the best for them for that hour or whatever, that's what they're gonna go do. And I feel like here it's so simple and I don't ever actually want to see that change about this area. I think the simplicity of just people wanting to get together and have a conversation is something that's so lost in a lot of places.

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And that's literally the only expectation here. With every event I've been shocked that people just show up. We've been blown away every single time. Like this weekend, no clue. So I don't know if I'll ever expect it 'cause it's just not normal, I think.

Jessica Taylor: Are you happy with the way that tourism functions in this area? And would you want to see it change in any way?

Kayla Orr: One thing I think would be really cool is tourists—well, actually, I don't think you can change that. They just don't know how small towns work. Most of them are pretty cool, honestly. Some of them are pretty snooty, but I feel like I'm used to that from being where I

lived at. No, I think actually for the most part it's fine. Yeah, it's totally fine. I don't feel the need to explain myself to everyone that comes through.

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I think a lot of people don't understand why someone would live out here, which is funny. Because one guy got annoyed—actually, he was being a real jerk. I was, like, well, you're vacationing where I live. [Laughter] I'm not trying to be mean to you but your condescending questions—I don't know. I'm just gonna be honest, if you're really happy with where you're living at, you're not gonna choose somewhere like this in the middle of nowhere to go vacation for a week at. I don't know, to think about that. So I think that's probably the interesting part is that people don't even realize how unhappy they are, actually. And then they'll project some of their internal thoughts on people out here and make these assumptions about people when most of these people are actually really happy. They're so happy and they have good families and they're good. So I think that's interesting.

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But as far as tourism, I don't want to see this place become like a Boone or— nothing like that. So it's kind of like a catch-22 'cause it's good for the businesses, tourists, but sometimes tourists make things become maybe more impersonal, which I don't think anyone in this area really wants that.

Jessica Taylor: You've also said that some folks don't know how small towns function.

Kayla Orr: Um-hm.

Jessica Taylor: Can you explain what you mean by that?

Kayla Orr: They always ask, “What do people do out here?” or “How do you make a living?” They just ask questions like that just because they’re used to going to Bank of America Stadium and huge concerts like [inaudible 0:50:47] right up the road and Target ‘cause they’re bored. So here I think it’s different. If you’re bored, I walk at my home, watch the sunset, or throw a fishing pole.

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You just do different things, but we still watch Netflix and [inaudible 0:51:05]. [Laughter] We still go to Target. We have Amazon. It’s not so far removed like people think.

Jessica Taylor: What do you hope for the future of your business, but also your farm?

Kayla Orr: I think I would like to see me being a little more hands-off being here every day. I want to see some local people or kids move in and start working here more. And I’d like to start teaching them what I’ve learned in business. Even if they don’t want to do something like this, I don’t ever expect anybody working here to care as much as I care about it. It’s not your company. So I just want to help empower them with skills that I feel like people poured into me to—why I’m at where I’m at. And so I’d like to take some kids and then teach them some skillsets I think will carry them to wherever they want to go.

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And then, yeah, I think we want to do some more outside events, is the goal. So if we could get some more people here, which we're working on, then that'll free us up to be able to do some more community things.

Jessica Taylor: And you were doing that when we were here. You were training younger folks.

Kayla Orr: Yeah.

Jessica Taylor: What's that process been like?

Kayla Orr: So fun. Yeah, they're awesome.

Jessica Taylor: Are they local folks or . . . ?

Kayla Orr: Um-hm. Yeah. So they both have hit us up so much for a job and we said no so many times 'cause I'm still learning what to do with them. It's not easy. That's the other thing is it's not easy to bring on staff. And mostly you don't know how to—the tax stuff. No one teaches you this stuff and then it's all these expectations and penalties of you don't do these things. And no one has the answers for you even though that's their job and that's their department, they don't know. So it's so frustrating to figure out what to do.

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So yeah, I just brought them on and I'm figuring out what to do. That's what I did all day today. [Laughter] But they're cool. They're, like, go with the flow. It's cute 'cause they're just happy somewhere like here, which is so cute because they came in a lot before we hired them. And so

that was really cool to see younger people coming in with their friends or their family. So we talked to them a little bit before we brought them in for an interview.

Jessica Taylor: And they're high schoolers, maybe?

Kayla Orr: Yeah. One's fifteen, one's sixteen.

Jessica Taylor: Oh, wow.

Kayla Orr: I know.

Jessica Taylor: And it sounds like you have things that you want to impart specifically about business?

Kayla Orr: Yeah, if they want to learn it. I'm getting to know them, so I've only worked with them a few shifts. They both have pretty different passions but they're both pretty driven, and so I'm curious if they stay with us for a while how they'll kind of grow up.

Jessica Taylor: That's great. And the other part of that question was, what do you hope for the farm?

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Kayla Orr: Yeah, I don't even know. Matt has all these dreams for it. This year he wants to do a pumpkin—we have this beautiful view at the top of the hill and so he wants to do a pumpkin patch where you go pick your own pumpkin up there. And we have live music and maybe barbecue and we're selling coffee and baked goods. So Matt is—I'm a dreamer but he is like a dreamer, dreamer. [Laughter] So I think we'll do that. Yeah, his dreams for the farm are huge, which is really cool.

Jessica Taylor: That is really cool. Is there anything you want to add for the record that we haven't talked about yet?

Kayla Orr: I don't think so, no.

Jessica Taylor: Okay. Thanks.

[End]