



"I'm Kevin Cosgrove. I'm an Irishman living in Holt, Michigan who makes a living as a craft baker for Stone Circle Bakehouse.

I think, honestly, so long as you keep the memory of someone alive, they stay alive, right? My father, Gene Cosgrove, would sit on the front porch of the house on 28th and Court Street in Sioux City, Iowa – which is on the Western range of the great plains, prior to the tall-grass prairies of the Dakotas – and he would greet people as they walked up and down the street: 'Hey, Bill!' 'Hiya, Bill!' 'Hello, Bill!' The fellow would oftentimes look at my father in an inquisitive fashion, but would wave back and maybe stop and chat. Now, I watched my dad do this two, three, four, five times, and finally – because I was pretty astute, right? – I told him I didn't think all of their names were Bill. But he told me it really didn't matter: it's that people want to be recognized. You don't have to know anything personal about them, but if you do, use that knowledge to recognize them as an individual and make them feel like they're the most important person in that moment...That's my philosophy, too. So, when I stand at the farmers market and I have repeat customers as I do, I start to know them and their quirks and their foibles and all those wonderful qualities; I start to know what's good and what's not; I start to know what they're going through, and really, their life story. Which all of that has nothing to do with bread, but has everything to do with bread, you know? I start to build relationships. Bread is simply the catalyst by which I have this opportunity. So how did I become a baker? I guess my father made it so.

Stone Circle Bakehouse began on January 8, 2009. We bake many different things: a lot of sourdoughs; baguettes; pugliese; challah; durum wheat; and ryes. We also do a lot of pastry work – which is remarkably popular, and outstandingly delicious, and certainly wholesome. Salted chocolate

rye cookies. Galettes, oh my gosh, they are the greatest thing on the planet. And croissants - we take those flavors that aren't necessarily traditional and stuff them into croissants. My point is, we take lots of liberties in what we bake, because we can...and, because it's fun. Focaccia is really what got us into that creative mindset. It opens you up to the possibilities of other flavor combinations; focaccia sets you free.

The Allen Farmers Market was the first farmers market I ever sold at. These markets became a source of community contact for me, which became a central marketing tool. Early on I was at the Dimondale Farmers Market, too, and one of my customers was the mail carrier for Horrocks. One day when she was delivering the mail, she told Kim Horrocks, 'There's this fellow out in Holt who's a baker - you need to see what he's doing.' Kim stopped by the bakery to check me out, and by the end of our conversation, he told me that my bread needed to be sold at his store. Then, an MSU chef called me and said that someone they knew was over at the Allen Farmers Market and had tried my bread, and why don't I bring them some of my samples? We ended up selling to five MSU dining halls. We also sell at Foods for Living, Monticello's, Capitol City Market, Campbell's Market Basket, LFA, Good Bites Food Truck, The People's Kitchen, Picnic A Food Truck, Capital Prime, and quite a few other restaurants. We also do CSA work.

Veggie Box is just another example of people taking care of people. Kat pulls together a lot of like-minded people to satisfy something as simple as food; and as complex as food; as important as food; so spiritually valuable as food, you know? Veggie Box has offered me an opportunity to reach parts of the community I was not in touch with. It reaches hundreds of people, and now I talk to at least one Veggie Box member a week who will come find me at the market. Plus, the economics of having a guaranteed sale is just really powerful for a producer.

I feel like I'm a follower in the local food movement. I want to follow the lead ANC's efforts - it's truly the point of reference for everything for me - because they lead by allowing the customer to guide them. It's remarkable, the depth of information that our customers bring to us. The depth of experience, the diversity of experience. From that, we learn and adapt, and are able to give back. Allen Neighborhood Center uses food and its various programming as a vehicle, but really, what they're doing is imparting an attitude. And if you're paying attention - if you have the opportunity to listen and to notice, to see and hear and touch this attitude - then you're blessed."