

A Slice of Heaven Smith's Orchard & Bake Shop

Shelley Smith, Owner

Success Magazine: What is the history of your orchard and bakery?

Shelley Smith: I worked making pies with a friend, and when she decided to pursue other career interests, I moved the pie business to the dairy farm and orchard where I lived with my husband and children. Our orchard was small and self-service, but when we opened the bake shop in 1999, we were able to expand in a number of ways. Opening the store at the farm enabled us to offer individual cuts of meat in addition to the sides and quarters that we previously sold. In 2006 we created an addition to the store, allowing us to sell even more wonderful local products.

SM: You are very well known around the region for your fantastic pies. What is your secret?

SS: The secret to our pies, I think, is just old-fashioned artistry and a very talented staff. The original crust recipe was my husband's grandmother's. She was a wonderful cook and baker, who fed many a farmhand over the years. All our pies are hand rolled and hand mixed. We never make any of our crusts ahead of time. All of the apples used in our pies are grown here in our orchards. We use as much fresh fruit as possible, and have access to high-quality frozen fruit year round.

SM: Where are your pies sold?

SS: Our pies are sold here at our farm on Jockey Street, and at locations all over the Capital District. We supply many area produce stands, orchards, delis, restaurants, ice cream stands, county fairs and churches, and we do fundraisers for schools and civic organizations in at least three counties.

SM: Are you open year round?

SS: All of our baked goods are available year round, thanks to an abundant supply of quality fruits year round. Our hours are Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday from 9-6, Sunday from 9-2 (Labor Day-Thanksgiving 9-6) and we are closed on Tuesdays.

SM: You also sell a variety of meat products. What are the benefits of farm raised meat?

SS: Our beef and pork are all raised here on our farm. All of our animals are well cared for and fed good quality feed, mainly raised on our farm as well. We don't use any hormones or anti-biotic laden feed. Our animals are sent to a U.S.D.A. inspected slaughter house, and sent back in individual packages. I think there is a real trend in this country to know where our food is coming from, and buying locally helps keep agriculture in our local communities. Many of our customers start out buying a piece or two of meat at a time, and end up buying sides or quarters.

SM: What else do you offer at your orchard and bake shop?

SS: The goal of our business is to offer as many local and New York State products as possible. We sell homemade ice cream from The Ice Cream Man in Greenwich, Palatine Cheese from Montgomery County, local honey from our farm veterinarian Dr. Chris Cripps, Whalen's Horseradish products, Thomas Poultry Farm eggs, locally grown potatoes, maple products, and a large assortment of jams, jellies, salad dressings, sauces, and relishes. We offer many varieties of apples grown in our orchard as well

as fresh apple cider. We make apple cider doughnuts every day, and have other baked goodies such as carrot cakes, fudge cakes, and cheesecakes.

SM: How many people do you currently employ?

SS: We have approximately six workers in the kitchen, but certain times of the year many more. My father-in-law, William Smith, still comes to the shop every day to help peel apples, at age 85. I have a wonderful staff and our operation is a true family affair. My three daughters, now mostly grown, still return often to help out. My entire family—mother, sisters, brothers, nieces, nephews—shows up at holiday time to help.

SM: What makes your business unique?

SS: When I started my business, I wondered if people would come out to the country to buy a pie. Well, they certainly have, and that is very rewarding. We are blessed to have a wonderful customer base, and the radius of where they come from seems to get larger. I think doing things the old-fashioned way is what makes us most unique.

SM: Why do you enjoy what you do? What inspires you on a daily basis?

SS: The things I enjoy most about what I do are many. I enjoy working on the same property as my husband, although some days we don't see much of each other. I enjoy working with a group of ladies who are a lot of fun to be around, I find it extremely rewarding to put out a product that makes people happy...and I think a slice of homemade pie makes most people happy. We've enjoyed some nice rewards with our pies, such as the New York State Agricultural Society choosing ours as their pie of choice for nearly ten years at their annual meeting in Syracuse, many people choose our pies instead of cake at their weddings, and we even had a party planner from Connecticut come buy our pies, at a customer's request, for an event they were planning.

