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Business

Cupcake Business Goes National

Just Baked owner Pam Turkin finds a business partnership via Facebook.

By [Joni Hubred-Golden \(/users/joni-hubred-golden/\)](/users/joni-hubred-golden/) | [Email the author \(#\)](#) | 5:00am

People make business connections in many ways. Some go to networking events, others plumb the depths of their business contacts.

Just Baked cupcake shop and bakery owner Pam Turkin turned to Facebook. And the result is an investment that will take her Livonia-based business into markets across the country, thanks to an investment from another Michigan success story, [Garden Fresh \(http://www.gardenfreshsalsa.com/start_event_js.html\)](http://www.gardenfreshsalsa.com/start_event_js.html).

Turkin, whose family moved from Farmington Hills to Franklin this week, said the idea to expand her already successful business came from Nathan Skid, a reporter at Crain's Detroit Business, who told her Just Baked reminded him of Garden Fresh.

After giving it some thought, she said, Turkin asked Just Baked publicist Jason Brown to call the Garden Fresh public relations person. She waited about a week and then got impatient. "So I Facebook'd (Garden Fresh founder) Jack Aronson. I sent him a private message and said I have a cupcake business, and I had 10 questions, I just wanted 10 minutes of his time," she said.

Aronson wrote back that his daughter was a big fan of Just Baked's chocolate and peanut butter cupcakes. "He invited us over the next day," Turkin said, adding she has since learned the Garden Fresh team has made a commitment to helping others in the food business.

The next day, Turkin and her husband, Todd, toured the Garden Fresh plant in Ferndale. Eventually, they began a mentoring relationship with the company vice president, Dave Zilko, who brought in a business consultant. After two very successful years of selling cupcakes, the Turkins put together a business plan and took a serious look at their financials, Pam Turkin said.

"We knew we had a good business. We didn't realize what the potential was," she said.

When they decided to open more stores and take on an investor, Garden Fresh seemed the perfect fit. The companies have similar philosophies, and that was particularly important to Turkin, who said the quality of Just Baked cupcakes and baked goods won't change with the expansion.

"Garden Fresh still makes their salsa one five-gallon container at a time," she said, adding Just Baked also makes cupcakes in small batches. "We've had people tell us ... we can get you buckets of eggs ... or buckets of batter. But we've always said we do what we do."

Just Baked's headquarters will stay in Livonia, Turkin said, where the company's first very loyal customers provided a foundation for the growing business. The Turkins are looking for a larger building, and Todd Turkin will take on the role of operations manager.

This year, Just Baked will turn out 850,000 cupcakes for five retail stores. Next year, Pam Turkin anticipates they'll bake *3 million*.

Custom cupcakes sold in the small shops will continue to be made in smaller batches; the company will also turn out six flavors packaged for distribution to grocery stores nationwide.

Despite this huge leap, the mother of five children who have all attended [North Farmington High School](http://farmington-mi.patch.com/listings/north-farmington-high-school) (<http://farmington-mi.patch.com/listings/north-farmington-high-school>) remains fairly calm.

"This just felt right," she said. "I can honestly say I didn't have a moment that I was regretful or worried it wouldn't be a good thing. Our employees will all benefit from the relationship."

The investment will also give the Turkins more personal breathing space, as they have always self-funded their business. In just two years, the company's sales have skyrocketed to more than \$1 million. Their son, Joshua Fishman, who currently works with the Jewish student center at Michigan State University, will start working for the company in August.

"It'll be nice to get things that make it easier for us to do our jobs every day," Pam Turkin said, adding Just Baked will open franchises in Troy and Brighton this year. The company expects to leave its footprint squarely in the Detroit metropolitan area and the state of Michigan first.

"We're gonna walk before we run," she said.

Just Baked is located at 33254 Seven Mile Road in Livonia. For information, visit [justbakedshop.com](http://www.justbakedshop.com) (<http://www.justbakedshop.com>).



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