

PREMIUM FOOD NEWS

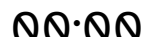
# Muddy's Bake Shop being sold to new local owners

By Jennifer Chandler, Special to The Daily Memphian

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3 comments





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On Leap Day 2008, Kat Gordon opened a small cupcake shop in East Memphis' Sanderlin Centre. Over the past 18 years, she has grown and restructured her beloved bakery in some unexpected ways — each time with the goal of making the business more successful.

This month marks another change for Muddy's Bake Shop.

Kat Gordon is selling the business.

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### Bakery moving into former Midtown Muddy's

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The owners of Belltower Coffee are purchasing the bakery, and next week Muddy's will join the Belltower community of businesses, which currently includes two coffee shops, a wholesale bakery, a roastery and a pottery studio.

The team taking over the bakery includes Belltower founders Christopher Galbreath and Micah Dempsey, as well as Stacy Hinkle. Hinkle is currently a partner with Galbreath and Dempsey in Honeysuckle Sweets, a wholesale bakery that she operates for the company.

Gordon said the decision to sell her bakery — and to whom — took a lot of thought and consideration.

“I started Muddy's in 2007 in my home kitchen and opened the bakery in 2008. It's been over 18 years, which is about 17 more than I dreamed,” she said. “It's been beyond incredible, and I'm

so proud of it and so grateful for it. And so grateful for the people who have made this such a special place. But after almost two decades, I'm ready for a change."

Over the years, Gordon has received offers for the business but none felt right.



**Muddy's Bake Shop opened in Sanderlin Centre in 2008.** (The Daily Memphian file)

"In thinking about who I'd trust to support and sustain Muddy's going into the next 18 years, it was really important to me to choose someone with shared values and mission but also the operational ability to run such a beloved local business," Gordon said.

The deciding factor for her was the fact that Belltower and Muddy's share a significant amount of culture and mission.

"We both want to spread kindness in our community through the creative products we offer," she said.

Gordon and Dempsey have been friends for several years and often get together to talk about business, leadership, life and what it looks like to build places that serve people in a city they both love deeply.

“Our friendship has been based on shared values and commitment to the Memphis community, and a deep appreciation for products made by real people, with care,” Gordon said, adding that because of this years-long friendship, she knew Muddy’s would be in good hands.

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Recipe Exchange: Muddy’s Honey-Thyme Peach Shortcakes

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She added that since Belltower is a community of businesses, the organization can provide operational infrastructure for Muddy’s in a way that a small business owner often can’t do on their own.

For Dempsey, the decision to purchase Muddy’s was easy given that it’s a beloved business known for its quality product and unique culture.

“Because it’s Muddy’s. End of sentence,” he said.

Moving forward, Dempsey will be the operations director for Muddy’s, a role he also holds for Belltower’s other businesses. Hinkle will be stepping into the role of creative director.

When the transfer of the business happens later this month, do not expect to see any immediate changes.

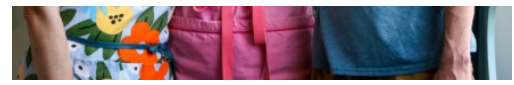
Muddy’s will remain Muddy’s, both Dempsey and Hinkle said.

They plan to spend the next year learning the business, and many of Muddy’s key team members will remain in place.

Andrea Fortwendel will continue to be Muddy’s general manager and operational leader, having occupied multiple leadership roles at Muddy’s over almost nine years.



Alyssa Jackson, who has worked at Muddy's for eight years, will remain Muddy's production manager, overseeing the daily kitchen flow and crafting of baked goods.



**The team taking over the Muddy's Bake Shop from Kat Gordon (middle) includes Stacy Hinkle (left) and Micah Dempsey (right).** (Mark Weber/The Daily Memphian)

“Protecting the identity, reputation and customer trust that the business has built over many years was a key factor in determining a buyer for Muddy's,” Gordon said.

The menu will remain largely unchanged. Dempsey and Hinkle emphasized that maintaining Muddy's commitment to, and reputation for, high-quality and outrageously delicious food is a top priority.

That said, some changes may eventually happen.

First and foremost, some of Honeysuckle Sweets' signature items may appear on the menu as Hinkle's bakery is “gently folded into” Muddy's. Hinkle is also working on adding some gluten-free items to the menu.

“Things will change, but our goal is for the course of 2026 to keep Muddy's as it is,” said Dempsey, alluding to additions such as a coffee program, expanded community events and a stronger wholesale presence down the line.

Gordon said she plans to be part of the transition process.

For the remainder of 2026, she will be renting the cooking classroom adjacent to the bakery to teach classes under her new venture, “The Homemade Kitchen,” as she determines her next chapter.

Dempsey said that he is grateful that Gordon thought Belltower was an ideal partner to lead Muddy's moving forward.

“We want to be a place where people feel welcome and are served an awesome product,” Dempsey said. “That's the goal we have

been chasing for the past 10 years.”

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#### **Jennifer Chandler**

A cookbook author and former restaurateur, Jennifer Chandler has been writing about food and dining for more than 25 years.

She is the author of four cookbooks: “The Southern Pantry Cookbook,” “Simply Salads,” “Simply Suppers,” and “Simply Grilling.” While she boasts a degree from Le Cordon Bleu, this Memphis native is about making real food accessible for real families.