

Thibodaux is a small town, home to many unique vendors and businesses. One of these streets is home to something particularly unique. One of these streets is home to the aroma of fresh baked goods flooding the air. One of these streets is home to the 12th Street Bakery.

Just a few houses down 12th street, the bakery looks like any other home, mainly because it is just that, a home. On the back porch is a neatly arranged ceramic table. Flecks of red glass break the earthy tones making up the table, and in the center are two loaves of bread. The back door opens and the smell of fresh baked bread pours out onto the porch. A woman trails behind the smell. She is tall and thin, dressed in a patterned cardigan, with a full head of brown curls that twist tight above her jawline. She is Elizabeth Cotter, the owner of 12th Street Bakery.

Cotter calls Alaska home, and for five years before she moved to Thibodaux she owned a bakery there called Bun on the Run. Her Alaskan bakery differs from 12th Street because Bun on the Run was a traditional style bakery.

“In the middle of the summer I had about seven employees that I was running, and it turned a lot more into people management,” she says. “It was very hectic and very stressful, and I didn’t do any baking and that’s just not where I wanted to be.”

Her voice is soft, calm and steady.

12th Street Bakery functions with no storefront. Cotter wanted more control and less stress when she began her bakery in Thibodaux. She produces all of her goods in the kitchen in her home and brings them out for pickup or to local farmer’s markets.

Without a storefront, Cotter's business spread at first by word of mouth, but now she is able to bring in customers via Facebook and her business website. The model that 12th Street follows is unique to southern Louisiana.

Cotter explains: "When I first looked at doing it, I looked into tagging on bread to a vegetable subscription. Its CSA, community-supported agriculture."

She says CSA is fairly common on the west coast. It is a system where people invest money into farmers, the farmers use that money to grow produce, and then those people receive the produce weekly, somewhat like a magazine subscription. Cotter says she searched for farmers in the Thibodaux area using CSA so she could tag bread along to the existing system, but she could not find anyone.

"I just took that model and applied it to my bakery," she says.

12th Street Bakery takes monthly bread subscription, and cotter also attends weekly farmers markets in Houma and Thibodaux. Her customers who are signed up for bread subscriptions meet her weekly at Peltier Park for pick-ups.

"Currently it's a month-long membership, and every week of that month you get one to two loaves of bread depending on how you sign up."

Cotter's monthly schedule changes as the seasons vary and different ingredients are in season or more popular. Each week of the month the breads change as well, so her customers can always expect something new. In the subscription, customers can opt for only the sandwich variety, only the artisan variety, or both. Cotter points out the types of bread for this week's delivery, sitting on the ceramic table. The sandwich variety is a harvest grain. She says the harvest grain goes through a longer fermenting process, which makes the breads texture sponge like. As she slices through the loaf its chocolate colored

brown center is revealed. The artisan variety for the week is a rosemary french bread, and Cotter thinks it will quickly become a customer favorite. This loaf is a light tan, and as she slices through it little dark green flecks of rosemary are exposed. Just by slicing the bread, the rich smell of rosemary erupts from the loaf.

“It’s organic flour, preservative free, and it’s always baked fresh the day of pickup,” Cotter says proudly.

She cares not only about her customers, but also about the quality of the product she is sending out. Baking is something close to Cotter’s heart.

“I always baked with my mom,” she smiles. “I remember growing up, she always baked a ton. Christmas was a big deal. Holidays were a big deal, and she always wanted a restaurant but that just wasn’t in the cards.”

Cooking and baking were engrained in Cotter at a young age, and she held onto that despite going to college to study ceramics. She says that throughout college she held odd jobs cooking and baking to get her by. Eventually she came to own Bun on the Run in Fairbanks.

“I think on year three of working at Bun on the Run I met my husband,” she says. “He was a customer cause he would go up [to Alaska] to do carpentry work.”

She moved down to Thibodaux with her husband, and soon word spread in the small town.

“As soon as everyone heard I was a baker, they were like ‘Thibodaux needs a bakery,’ and that’s kind of how it progressed.”

When it comes to the goods Cotter bring to farmer’s markets, she laughs and says, “It’s just kind of how much I can fit into a day. I have a few set things that I always show

up with; bread, scones, and chocolate chip cookies. But I've worked in enough freedom for myself that I can still play around and look at cookbooks."

She says in addition to these items she sometimes works in cinnamon rolls, chocolate sweet rolls, different types of cookies, and sometimes even cakes or cobblers.

"I am the two hands of 12th Street," Cotter smiles.

As the owner and only employee of 12th Street Bakery, Cotter says she works some time off into her schedule. The bakery runs in the fall and spring for four months, and Cotter gives herself time off in December after filling holiday orders as well as time over the summer to go back to Alaska.

12th Street Bakery has been a licensed LLC since 2013, and since then Cotter's client base has grown

"I do feel really fortunate that Thibodaux is willing to support me," she says. "My Wednesdays are just bread subscription, and that's the biggest that it's been since I started it up. I baked almost 20 for that this Wednesday."

As her clientele expands, the need for more space arises. Cotter and her husband began building a ceramics studio behind their home in 2013, but it transformed into the bakery. The building is small and painted pastel sunshine yellow.

"It's a bit of a work in progress," she says with a slight laugh. "The water is a project we're working on now."

An industrial size kitchen sink lines one wall with holes where faucets and nozzles belong. The bakery is covered in windows, giving the interior a soft natural glow and creating a sense of peace, reflective of Cotter's personality. From the bakery to the house is a path, worn down to dirt in the middle of the lush green grass. This path marks

the footsteps Cotter makes daily from walking back and forth between her semi-functional bakery and her in-home kitchen.

“I can’t wait to be in here full time,” she says with a hint of excitement in her voice. “I just love the feel here.”

Cotter’s next step is to add more space for storage and a restroom to her bakery. She is hopeful that her bakery will be fully functional soon. One thing is certain; the sweet smell of fresh baked goods will continue to flood 12th Street.