

One Girl Desserts opens in Yorktown with farmers market, homemade sweet treats

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Najeonna Iman Howze stands behind the counter inside her bakery, One Girl Desserts, in Yorktown. (WYDaily/Lucretia Cunningham)



Najeonna Iman Howze stands in front of her new One Girl Desserts store front in Yorktown.
(WYDaily/Lucretia Cunningham)

Farmers market regular, One Girl Desserts, is making its signature “Chocolatey Chewy Bar” a staple on the Peninsula with the opening opening of its first brick-and-mortar location in Yorktown Friday.

Owner, founder, and baker, Najeonna Iman Howze, is the one-woman show behind the name. She recently moved from Chesapeake to Yorktown and brought her homemade sweet treats with her.

She’s just 22 years old but Howze is far from being a newcomer on the Hampton Roads baking scene.

“I’ve never had a store before, it’s been home-based since 2012,” she said.

Howze was just 14 years old when she said her mom took out a business license for her baking company then called “Naje’s Dollar Treats” but since she turned 18, she took over the license and changed the name to what it is now.

She continued to run the business out of her home and with the support of her family making weekly rounds to farmers markets in Chesapeake, filling orders at local shopping centers, and more recently since moving to Yorktown, Howze has been a regular at local Market Days.

“My older brother who has autism really likes the beach but doesn’t like places that are too crowded, busy, or loud and every time we’d come here to the beach, he was in love,” she said. “It was important that if we were going to pick somewhere, it’d be somewhere everyone could be happy.”

A speaker from the York County Commissioner of the Revenue’s Office welcomed Howze, her family, and One Girl Desserts during a grand opening and ribbon cutting Friday.

With a mother fighting lupus and a brother who is severely autistic, Howze said she takes on the role of her family’s caregiver which in a roundabout way, led her to a passion for baking — a gift she could use to provide for her family.

Howze was 13 when her mother’s illness prevented her from making her traditional holiday brownies. She said she’d begged to be allowed to make them on her own, “and they came out better than hers.”

“I shared them with a couple of my friends and they refused to not pay me,” Howze said. “One of my friends said ‘you should sell these,’ and under the circumstances, my mom was a single mom of me and my two brothers...it was really difficult and I’ve always wanted to find a job to help out.”

Mom’s holiday brownies, or “the brownies that started it all,” are now called “Chocolatey Chewy Bars” and have become a One Girls Desserts bestseller with its cakelike crust, chewy center, and topped of drizzled icing.

The “legendary” brownie will always be available at the store along with coffee cake (another fan-favorite) and one her many dessert breads made of pumpkin, banana, or cinnamon spice.

Customers can also expect cheesecakes, banana pudding, fruit bars, danishes, and mini pies in the store and Howze said she accepts custom orders through her website.

One Girl Desserts is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from noon to 6 p.m. at 7816 George Washington Memorial Highway. Stay connected or learn more by clicking here.

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