



HOME SWEET HOME

A burnt-out lawyer launches a second career in his mom's home kitchen.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARVIN SHAOUNI

Jeffrey Imerman was working as a lawyer at a big New York City firm when, at age 39, he made a career turn that no one saw coming: He moved home to Detroit to bake cakes—with his mom. Jeffrey's brother had battled cancer, and the health scare made Jeffrey realize that life is short. He wanted a job that was more fulfilling than litigation. His inspiration? His mom Jane's chocolate chip cake, a family favorite.

While he was still at the law firm, Jeffrey wrote a 50-page business plan for Imerman Cake Company and e-mailed it to his mom out of the blue. "I had a well-paying job and I was saving a lot of money," he says. "But I was working until 2 or 3 in the morning." Jane was all for the business plan for a different reason: "It was an opportunity to have him back home!" she says. After he returned, the mother-son duo

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spent a year in Jane's kitchen perfecting the recipe and developing a cinnamon coffee cake.

In 2013, Jane and Jeffrey started selling their cakes at farmers' markets. By a stroke of luck, a local news anchor loved their cakes and featured them on TV, triggering a flood of orders from grocery stores and corporations. Today, the Imermans sell their cakes online (imermancake.com) and in grocery stores across Michigan and in the Chicago area, and a portion of each sale goes to Imerman Angels, a foundation Jeffrey's brother started. Jeffrey has not exactly shortened his workweek since his lawyer days, but now when he's up until 2 or 3 in the morning, he's filling orders or making early deliveries. "After working for others for so long," he says, "being my own boss is what I want to do."



CAKES: BEN GOLDSTEIN/STUDIO D.