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Kane County Magazine

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a fresh take



SWEET GOODBYES & NEW BEGINNINGS

REFLECTING ON A YEAR OF CHANGE AND REBIRTH

With Katie McCall, owner of Two Wild Seeds bakery

Almost a year ago, we unexpectedly lost our dearest family dog, Lola. She was three days shy of her 11th birthday, and every morning as I pass by her collar hanging on the closet doorknob, the faint jingle of her tags sends a rush of mixed emotions through my body.

Month by month, the sharp, stinging sadness (and regret of *I could've done more*) has softened. And yes, fond memories live on, but there will always be a small hole in my heart, longing to be filled by a furry friend when the time is right. It's a type of fulfillment only a pet provides: an unconditional love that no matter the day you had or mood you're in — they're always there, tail wagging, body wiggling, looking for a scratch on the back and kiss on the nose.

In times of transition, I've found solace in understanding that our experiences, relationships, careers and ultimately our purpose ebbs and flows in cycles. As they say, people (pets, too) come into our lives for a reason, a season or a lifetime and each serves an important role. I'm eternally grateful for the gifts Lola gave me ... she taught me to slow down, appreciate those little moments in between and simply strive to do better.

And now, I look at our bakery, Two Wild Seeds, in a similar light.

This past Memorial Day marked five years of business at our brick-and-mortar location, and shortly thereafter we announced the future closing of our sweet shop. While it came as a bit of a shock to the community, the truth is that a huge weight was lifted.

Anyone who has owned a small business, let alone a small food business, knows it is not for the faint of heart. Though what's shown on the surface of our bakery is very real and authentic — a brimming case of delicious treats, beautifully decorated cakes and fun events on social media — it's only a small piece of the pie.

Running a business is a 24/7 job; we don't clock in and out. The hats we wear are endless, from product ordering, staff scheduling and grocery shopping to recipe costing, recipe development and keeping inventory of anything from printer ink to coffee lids. Let's not forget providing customer service, fulfilling orders, managing social media and emails, navigating the unpredictability and ever-changing demands of the market, and above all, spending restless nights awake in bed, running through the never-ending to-do list.

The work is inherently draining but



equally rewarding, and the lessons I've learned as an entrepreneur have only given me more clarity for future projects and goals. I went from being a young culinary school grad with a journalism degree to co-owning and running one of the most sought-after bakeries in the Chicagoland area. I gained confidence and immeasurable business skills, built industry connections and ultimately discovered my genuine passion for preparing food — something that will be with me wherever I go.

Like losing Lola, sometimes we have to say goodbye and close one door in order to open another, and until we do so, we don't know what could be waiting on the other side. But don't worry, I'm not going

anywhere! Returning to my writing roots here with *Kane County Magazine* has been an absolute joy, and I look forward to not only continuing this column, but also expanding into other areas of professional writing down the road.

For many, change is scary because it welcomes the unknown; but for me, I see change as the only true opportunity for growth. So, for anyone who is on the cusp of transition and looking for a sign, let this be the little nudge you need to take that leap of faith. In the wise words of e.e. cummings: "Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight, or any experiences that reveals the human spirit."

■ Katie McCall is a bona fide Midwestern girl. Raised on four acres of rural property in Yorkville, she was taught to respect nature and all of its bounty. From foraging morel mushrooms in the woods to picking wild raspberries for homemade jam, Katie feels most at home when in nature and preparing food for others. When she's not running the downtown St. Charles bakery Two Wild Seeds, she can be found nose-deep in cookbooks, exploring the outdoors with her family — and eating ... always eating. Photo by Victoria C Photos.



CHOCOLATE-PEANUT BUTTER SNACK BITES

My sweet doggie girl, Lola, lived for peanut butter — on her bones, a glob on the end of a spoon, you name it, she loved it! This easy one-bowl recipe is a little tribute to her and the wonderful times we shared together.

MAKES ABOUT 12 BITES

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1/2 cup peanut (or almond) butter
- 1/4 cup unsweetened, shredded coconut flakes
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/4 cup semisweet or dark chocolate chips
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 1 tablespoon flaxseed
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Pinch of sea salt

Combine all of the ingredients in a bowl and mix thoroughly.

Using a very small ice cream scoop or heaping tablespoon, scoop mixture into hands and roll into bite-sized balls. Place them on a small plate or tray lined with parchment paper and chill in the refrigerator until set.

Store in an airtight container and keep bites in the refrigerator up to 2 weeks or in the freezer for 1-2 months.

Note: Bites become soft if left at room temperature too long. Consider freezing them prior to a long excursion, allowing them to thaw naturally prior to snack time!

