

Abigail Zorn:

So, what would you say inspired you to open up this shop? Was it that you saw kind of an opening in the local economy where this could be a potential fit or just a passion of yours?

Emma Briner:

Yeah, no, if I planned this, I would be giving me a lot of credit. I was about this time last year, just walking by the building, and there was a previous business there, um, and I was intrigued, so I walked in, and then, kind of, um, the original owner before me, uh, is from Thailand, and so I lived in Thailand for a little bit, and we kind of bonded over some soup that she was selling, so, um, yeah, this all started with me getting emotional over a bowl of soup, so, I, um, got just, like, Fell in love with the place and I travel a lot and Columbia is where I'm from, but with working full time, I kind of, uh, I worked in hospitality.

I worked at a coffee shop, and I've been a barista for, um, a little over seven years, and before that lived overseas. And so, all of my life kind of, you know, and you can look back and see how it's like funneling towards that. But I was looking kind of for a place that I could also enjoy Columbia and it was really sweet that building and everything and then back in September pretty spontaneously I had a conversation with the owner and basically ended up just taking over her lease.

Abigail Zorn:

You lived overseas for a while. So you said Thailand was one of the places where there like any other places. Did any of them, would you say, kind of influence what you bring into the shop?

Emma Briner:

Yeah, absolutely. They've influenced, I've gotten to live in a few countries and I guess lived in is probably a loose term for a number of months at a time.

So I have been in, a lot of places in Asia, Central America, South America, things like that. And so, each country I got the ability to be in, and, um, a few of them I actually ended up getting to work in coffee shops. And I feel like in every country I went to, I, if I didn't work in a coffee shop, I became involved with a coffee shop somehow.

Because it really is a place that, um, When you're a foreigner, when you're someone that isn't in a culture, it's a really amazing place where you can go and simultaneously feel really at home while also learning so much about what that country and what that culture and what that city and that group of people or whatever has to offer and what they love.

That definitely has influenced how I approach having a space where people can come into, because I've been someone who, you know, with Columbia, it's like, we have a lot of international students in like the college towns, but also just like people from other countries. And even if you're from the States, but Columbia isn't your home, if you're a student who's moved away for the first time, or even learning how to be independent or and all that stuff, it's

really impactful to have had that experience to go somewhere where I am not familiar and learn how to feel welcomed by people and taken care of and served.

And so, um, that, like, really has strongly influenced how I approach caring for people and opening the doors to a place where, you know, you can come and slow down and rest and feel known and cared for, even when things around you might feel intimidating or new.

Abigail Zorn:

Obviously the, one of the main focuses is the tea selection and the tea shop part of it. Is it like locally sourced tea or like how do you source it or choose what flavors you're going to bring in for a couple of months or bring out?

Emma Briner:

Yeah, I think the amazing thing about tea is it is the second most consumed beverage in the world. So, and the way I feel like I, You know, and this is my opinion, but like, I like to compare tea to soccer or football.

It's like soccer being a sport that around the world globally outside of the Western world is probably one of the most main Sports and like people bond culturally over that and I feel like in the States it's not something like that it's up and coming. We're starting to really enjoy it football is like our main, I'm sure that all the sports people would be mad at me for saying that, but that's like something that I would say, like, we have coffee and coffee is something that the Western world is really into, but tea is really up and coming.

Whereas cultures are built around tea ceremonies and things like that. And so something that's super important to me that has been important to me working through, This specific trade, whether that's coffee, tea, we know in like the fashion industry, all these things is having direct trade. And so I was looking for tea companies that were direct trade.

So that means that they, um, have direct relationships with the farmers where they source their tea, how they get it so it's ethically sourced. And it's a little bit, it's a step further from fair trade where you can just get like a stamp of, you know, approval if you fill out a form and it's the right thing, but you may not actually have that relationship.

And because I did live overseas and I worked really closely with different coffee farmers and saw a lot into that world. It's really important to me. That's kind of how I source that. And as far as like the teas I select, I try to keep one because we focus on tea, have a huge variety. Um, the concept of Wynnsome is really simple, which allows us to get really detailed with our two offerings, cake and tea.

I try to have things seasonally that are, you know, pair nicely with what season we're literally in, but then also have options for the tea purists, the people that like their single origin types of tea that are a little bit more the nuanced things that you can really, taste like the pureness of that versus people who just enjoy having flavored teas or things like that

Abigail Zorn:

What currently is one of your favorite tea blends and your favorite cake that you have inside of your shop right now?

Emma Briner:

Yeah, I have to be careful with this because I told everyone my favorite tea and now we're sold out. So now I don't even get to drink it. I'm just kidding. But my favorite tea right now, man I have a different favorite tea from each of our selections. So from our black teas to our green teas and all that, the peach blossom is really, really good, especially for the springtime.

It's a white tea. It's a little bit more delicate and it's really light and refreshing. And I love anything with peach. Um, personally, big peach gal. So yeah, the peach blossom I would say is probably my favorite right now. At least this past week I've been drinking that a lot. And then my favorite cake right now is the berries and cream, which is basically like a tres leches cake. And so it's like a layered cake with a tres leches soak and then like fresh berries in it. So yeah, that one is, is my favorite at the moment.

Abigail Zorn:

Do you have any memorable stories that stood out to you within the first months of being open? Like, any particular day that you were like, wow, this was a great day, this was a great interaction, or I'm going to remember this.

Emma Briner

The first day was actually really funny to me because, you know, you have all this hype and all of this like "what is the first day of my business going to look like?" Like we've come so far to this point, and I stayed up until like 2 a.m. the day before baking. We had all of our team of people were just like, had like not eaten much. We hadn't had a lot of water. We hadn't slept. And so, by the first day, I was absolutely like wiped. I felt terrible. I had a migraine. And then the doors opened and we're like, all right, this is our opening day and people were so excited and asking me so many questions and I kept going in the back like sitting on an apron on the floor and I was like, oh my gosh, I'm never going to make it.

And so, it was just funny because then the next day when I ate food and drank water and slept normally, um, It was so sweet and so emotional to be able to go into the space and interact with people and be like, whoa, like something that was impossible a few months ago is possible today. And I think the best days, honestly, is every day I get to be in there and kind of, you know, It's quiet and like tuned out and people are just having conversations and laughing and enjoying.

Abigail Zorn:

My last question is what do you hope customers take away from their experience at Wynnsome? I know you kind of discussed just that comfortable place to unwind and be

themselves for a minute, but is there like anything else that you hope they walk out of Wynnsome feeling this way or something?

Emma Briner:

I hope people walk out of Wynnsome kind of being a little bit more in touch with kind of why we do the things we do. Like, we really prioritize rest so that we can work hard so that people can come and rest. And I love people's passions. I love when people are doing what they're passionate about, and so, hopefully, I mean, the team that we're kind of building around it is, everybody's pressing into what they love to do well.

Like, this isn't just me doing all of it, and my hands are on everything. It's like, no, this is, this person loves marketing or this person, um, like my brother's the one that roasts our coffee. So like he wants to roast and so it's like, great, we have an outlet. We have a place for you to do that and to press into your passion and, um, those kinds of things.

So hopefully people will just feel inspired to like leave that space and have the courage to do what they love to do and to do it well.