

Interviewee: Elena Viapiano
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Abstract: Elena Viapiano was born and raised in Holden, Massachusetts where she has lived all of her life until recently. After attending high school at Wachusett Regional High School, she graduated in 2013 and went on to pursue a college degree in Culinary Arts at New England Culinary Institute in Vermont. Inspired by her father's restaurant, Elena wanted to join the restaurant industry with a business of her own, thus opening her bakery called "Baked Holden." In this interview, Elena discusses her inspirations, her hardships and her future goals as a businesswoman in the restaurant industry. Due to her success during the last few years, she was able to buy a house in North Brookfield, Massachusetts and is now living with her boyfriend where they share the responsibilities of housework. She discusses how her strict Italian upbringing shaped her into the successful business owner she is today. Furthermore, she discusses how grateful she is for having supportive parents who in their own way have helped her achieve what she has at such a young age. She also discusses her challenges as a student with learning impediments, as well as her future goals for her business. Throughout this interview, Elena shows her appreciation for the city of Worcester and its booming restaurant industry.

CL: So, what is your full name, including both maiden name and married name if applicable?

EV: So my first name's Elena, my middle name is Elizabeth and my last name is Viapiano.

VO: And when were you born?

EV: I was born in 1995 in Worcester [Massachusetts].

CL: Have you ever...[indistinguishable noise].

VO: I was born in 1997 [laughs] [indistinguishable noise].

CL: Me, too.

CL: Have you ever been married?

EV: No.

CL: Do you have children?

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EV: No.

CL: What cultures or ethnicities do you identify with?

EV: Italian and Portuguese.

CL: Oh, I am Portuguese, too.

VO: Alright, it's a little creepy, but tell me about your parents.

EV: Not creepy [laughs].

VO: That's what it says right there [laughs].

EV: I have very interesting parents.

VO: OK.

EV: So, my mom was born and raised on Martha's Vineyard. She's an island girl. She moved here to Worcester to go to Clark [University] when she went to college. And then my dad is actually from Italy so he's an immigrant.

CL: Wow.

EV: He moved here when he was about five. I think five. And my grandparents obviously wanted a better life. My grandmother is a nurse and my grandfather's a tailor. So, my dad grew up with that very strict mentality of being in an Italian household. And that's how he raised me and that's how he kind of raised me to be the business owner I am today, that's how I always say that. He's a very strong loving guy, but he has a strict side.

CL: Do you think your mom being an island girl had any influence on the restaurant? Like the tiki bars and stuff like that.

EV: No, so my mom...you wouldn't notice it. My mom is a very closed book, she's not open about anything. My parents and myself love to travel so ever since I was little we've travelled the world and that's kind of where the island theme came in.

CL: OK.

EV: We love going to the beach. Like, my parents actually started the first Flip Flops [family restaurant] in Rhode Island because we had two different Flip Flops at one time. So that's kinda where it started but we ended up closing that place because Rhode Island was supposed to be our

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getaway so it was, ended up being too much work and we weren't relaxing when we were supposed to relax. So they closed that and then opened Flip Flops here [Holden, MA].

CL: Oh, that's really interesting. What part of Rhode Island?

EV: Charlestown [Rhode Island].

CL: I've heard of that. I'm from Southeastern Massachusetts so I'm like right on the border. But, where have you lived during your life? Did you grow up in Worcester?

EV: I grew up in Holden. Born and raised in Holden. I actually just moved to North Brookfield about two months ago. So I've lived my life in Holden pretty much.

CL: Wow.

VO: Ok. Ok. So what was the neighborhood that you, like, grew up in? How was it generally?

EV: I lived right down the street. It was right behind Sunnyside Ford. It was a very small neighborhood when I grew up in the neighborhood it was all older kids, we were the youngest kids in the block. So it was very different, we were always the younger ones getting picked on or everyone babysat us.

VO: Right.

EV: And when we got older, me and my sister we were the older ones. We had a bunch of new families move in. And by the time I left for college they were all going to school and I used to babysit them and stuff like that.

CL: So that's like a good first job, I bet.

EV: Yeah [laughs].

VO: Kind of.

CL: Kids are tough.

EV: Kid's are definitely tough.

CL: [laughs]

VO: Ok. Let's see.. How did you...

CL: Do other family members live in the same area as you?

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EV: Yes. Pretty much most of my family lives either in the Worcester area or in Massachusetts somewhere. My sister actually goes to college in Massachusetts. My mom's side is all still on Martha's Vineyard. My dad's side there's still some in Italy, but for the most part, like his sister loves in Rutland [Massachusetts], my grandparents live in Rutland. Then we have a bunch of aunts and uncles that live in Worcester.

VO: What family is still in Italy?

EV: A lot of his aunts and uncles. My great aunts and uncles. They had a lot of siblings. My grandfather, I think, had 10 siblings.

VO: Wow. Like my grandparents do...

EV: I'd say about half of them came here as well to America and half of them stayed there. A few of them have since passed away. I know there's, well, two, three? That are in Italy right now. Two or three. I have a lot of family. It gets really confusing.

CL: Yeah, I have a big family too so I get it. So I know you said you had some connections to the city of Worcester. Do you think that, like, what challenges do you think it phases and like what would you change about the city?

EV: I think with Worcester you have the good parts and the bad parts. I think growing up you had that bad parts that your parents told you to stay out of.

VO: Right.

EV: I ended up going to a dance studio in Worcester so I knew a lot of people in Worcester so it was a very different community than it is in Holden. And you had those parents that were like you can't walk outside after dark. I think that's what I would fix. Making it safe enough to have your kids do whatever. I mean, back when my dad was a kid you could roam around the streets and that's what you did at night and unfortunately now-a-days you can't do that.

CL: No, not at all [laughs].

VO: Yeah, what dance studio did you go to?

EV: Chicki's Dance World.

VO: Ok, I went to The Dance Place in Worcester.

EV: Oh okay.

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VO: What are characteristics that you think that make Worcester the place that it is, like what sets it apart from other cities?

EV: The diversity of people, I think...But, hard working people. I mean, to be honest, you have all those businesses that are my competition and they make me push myself even harder to be the better business owner I can be. You have so many great businesses. I mean, bakeries and restaurants and the amount of businesses and business owners in Worcester, I think that's what makes Worcester great. Like it's such a good opportunity. Some people don't get the opportunity to start a small business in some parts of the country or you know, the world. And, I mean, Worcester, it just keeps growing and that's what I love about it.

VO: True.

CL: I do notice that Worcester has a lot of small businesses.

EV: Yeah.

CL: And it's definitely an interesting part about, like, the community here.

EV: Yeah and they just keep adding stuff and, I mean, you see that everyone is starting to redo streets and stuff like that so that the businesses can get more business and what do they have, that new... I don't even remember, what's that baseball team coming?

CL: Oh, the Pawtucket Red Sox.

VO: Oh yeah, yeah, my friend works for them.

EV: Yeah.

CL: What do you think that women's experiences in Worcester have been generally?

EV: I don't know to be honest. I think now women are beginning to be more socially accepted. I think 20, 30 years ago, I mean, even 10 years ago small business owners that were women, I don't think, were taken seriously, I mean as of right now as a younger businesswoman I'm not taken seriously, I have to work for it, I have to work for the respect that I get. But, I mean, you have so many different women in Worcester that are now opening up businesses and it's a complete change and I'm glad to be in a city—I'm not in that city, but technically I am—that is growing in its acceptance of women.

VO: Right, yeah.

CL: Yeah, so we did notice that you are a lot younger than we expected you to be.

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EV: Yes

VO: I kept calling you Mrs. [laughs] Yeah, just called her Mrs.

EV: It's totally ok [laughs].

CL: But, like, how do you think you've used your age to your advantage?

EV: To my advantage? I have definitely—I know how to use social media, I know how to...

CL: It's huge right now.

EV: ...get the clientele I need to. I do get the older crowd, but I know how to draw people in with crazy different flavors like you've got the doughnuts on social media trend right now and...

VO: I love doughnuts.

EV: ...you've got, again, you've got so many different trends and being in that age group, both foodies, definitely works to my advantage.

VO: Oh, yeah. It's huge.

CL: Do you think your ideas are so much more different than your dad's, because your dad has owned this business for, what, 17 years, you said?

EV: Yeah.

CL: And so, do you think you bring fresh ideas, do they ever collide?

EV: Yes and no. He sometimes gives me full reign of whatever I want to do, but then there's sometimes when he's like, this is how I've done it and this is how I wanna do it. Usually, I'm usually right, so he ends up—we've gotten a lot better. I think when we started three years ago working together side by side, it was... not... we were butting heads constantly.

VO: Right.

EV: Now, it's a lot better. He kind of understands, like, I'm younger so I know what people want. And he's very very old fashioned to the point to where our servers if you have sleeves [tatoos], that you've got to cover it up. Which I totally understand, both me and my father have tattoos so he's just old fashioned that way and I kind of get it, where you want your server to have...

VO: Presentable sort...

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EV: Just be presentable, I mean, I don't want, I mean, nothing against it, I have piercings, I have tattoos, I don't care, but I kind of agree with him when it comes to that old-fashioned stuff.

CL: Yeah. It's more, like, a professional thing.

EV: Yes, exactly.

CL: Gotcha.

VO: Let's see...so move on to, like, education. So where did you attend school?

EV: I went to Wachusett, right up the street. I graduated there in 2013 and then I went to college in Vermont, I went to the New England Culinary Institute.

CL: Ok, was there like a certain program in that?

EV: My program was baking and pastry, so I got to learn two straight years of just baking and pastry. I actually did have to go through a management course and a culinary course so there was, I think, two months that we basically had to run the front of the house of the restaurant at the school and I also had to learn some culinary stuff. So, I mean, I'm not going to say I know how to cook, but I do have some background when it comes to that.

VO: Ok.

EV: So I got to learn a lot when I went to—they call it NECI.

VO: I like that, it's cute [laughs]

CL: Yeah, it is.

EV: It's a very small school, but I learned so much.

VO: And how long were you there for?

EV: I was there for two straight years, I also—the program was a little weird. It's two straight years, you get very minimal breaks because in the restaurant industry you don't get many breaks.

CL: Yeah, not at all.

EV: I worked straight through holidays. And then we did two six month internships, so I got to go wherever I wanted. They had so many different connections, I mean, I could work in Disney if I wanted to. I ended up staying local because I'm a homebody so I worked in Boston

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[Massachusetts] at a bakery and I worked in Northborough [Massachusetts] at a catering company. And I ended up getting hired and I stayed there for a little while.

VO: So was that like your first full time job, after school?

EV: Yeah.

CL: So, you said that you took some business courses, right? Is that what you said? How...

EV: I don't know how business-y they were, but it was kind of a management course, it wasn't like the full blown college courses. But they want you to kind of get the basis of everything and that's what I liked about the school so we had a science class, which I hated...

VO: Me, too [laughs].

EV: But yeah, the business course was the general business of how not to spend too much money on food and keep your low costs low and stuff like that.

CL: Ah, so it was helpful.

EV: Yeah, it was definitely helpful.

CL: So what challenges did you experience when getting an education?

EV: I didn't wanna go to college.

CL: Really?

EV: I thought that I didn't want to spend the money, and then I also had the experience. I had been working here since probably before you should start working. So I knew everything, I knew how to waitress, I knew how to bartend, I had gone through everything so I'm like, why do I need to? And I started baking on the side. I was learning a lot, but my mom—my dad didn't go to college, he got a high school education and then he went into the U.S. Army. So, he did that route, and I actually almost did that route, but I decided—my dad was a weighing factor. He was like, “Do you really wanna go into the military?” And that was a big confrontation between us, but my mom was like, “Look, I'll help you out with paying for it, but I think it's best that you get a college education.”

VO: Right.

EV: Now, in this industry, you technically don't. My head chef doesn't have classical training, it's all about your experiences and it's when I found the program at NECI and I fell in love with that program because you got to go out for two different six-month internships and actually get

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the experience where you weren't just stuck in the classroom. I was never good at school. I had dyslexia and I had ADHD so I had a lot of challenges growing up, so going to school, I was like, "I can't go to college, I'm going to flunk out or something's gonna happen," but when I got there my first day was inside of a kitchen, it wasn't in the classroom.

CL: That's wild.

EV: We ended up having lectures, which absolutely were miserable. But you were in the kitchen eight hours before that and then you got to sit down, usually half the time we all fell asleep, but—that's on down-low, no ones knows that. And the good thing with this school is that it pushed me to be better. You had to pass with 80s or above, you couldn't get anything lower than an 80 or technically you were failing.

CL: Oh my god.

VO: Oh boy

EV: It was a very, very strict school, but it pushed me to be the person I am today and I wouldn't change it for the world. And I thank my mom for pushing me to go to college.

VO: I'm sure you don't tell her that [laughs]

EV: I have now, because she always asks me, she's like, "Do you regret it still?" and I'm like, "No."

VO: That's good. Let's see... So what support networks and mentoring have been a part of you? I know you mentioned like, the two internships or anything else...

EV: The two internships were awesome. My second internship I worked for Pepper's Catering and it was actually unpaid for the first couple months and I really wanted to work with the pastry chef, Lisa McAffery. She basically taught me everything she knew. She was really great to work under. And that's kind of when I fell in love with cake decorating. I mean she'd show me whatever I'd ask and that's kind of—I left Pepper's to start this bakery and she was really supportive about it.

CL: That's amazing.

EV: And that's what I like. Sometimes you have, obviously, rivalries and competition, but when—I've never had like an actual mentor like some chefs do. I would say she was one of the big influences in my life that made me kind of be the person I am today as well as my father. Another person was my great-grandmother. She lived until I was about 16. So, she was the one that kind of knew I wanted to do baking and pastry when I grew up. Excuse my language—she's a hardass. She's a Portuguese woman and she lived on her own for a while. Her husband did

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pass away way before I was born. She was resilient; she just always said don't give up on what you want. I always think about that because I always try not to give up on stuff so I kind of have her in the back of my mind yelling at me. But definitely her and my mom always tells me, "You're definitely just like her." But yeah, those are the three that I'd say.

CL: Did you ever think about starting your own business from scratch?

EV: Yes, I didn't think it was going to happen when I was 23 or... I was 20 when it started. I was 19, 20 when the bakery opened and I did not believe in myself when it first opened either. I was like, my father is crazy, he's delusional. But he had full faith in me, and that's kind of when it started. I was thinking maybe when I turn 30 and I save enough money then I can start something because a lot of people don't understand the restaurant industry. I think a lot of people see these things on social media and stuff like that and it takes a lot of money and a lot, a lot, a lot of hard work to start from complete scratch. I had the support of my father and this restaurant and our customers...

CL: Yeah, customer loyalty is huge.

EV: So, when I first started it was basically almost starting from scratch. A lot of people didn't know I was baking. I was working somewhere else so it wasn't like I had a customer base. The regulars at the restaurant knew I could bake, but I had to get a whole new clientele myself and being a restaurant with a bakery inside of it, a lot of people don't understand it. So there was a lot of sleepless nights where I had to keep pushing to get that clientele and just keep working and now that we're here now, it's legit crazy.

VO: So, what were your primary responsibilities, like, in terms of like, housework, and like, child care like when you were growing up? So you said you babysat and stuff?

EV: Yeah, so my sister was just two years younger than I am. My parent were very strict growing up. We didn't—I mean now a days everyone has iPads or got their phones, I didn't get a phone til I was probably in eighth grade. Right, I actually bet my father, I was like, "If I win this dance competition or if I get this certain title, I want a cellphone." He was like, "Fine." And I ended up doing it, but they were always very, "Go out, play outside, don't go watch tv." The dynamic in the house was just be kids and play, don't be on your phones, don't be in front of the TVs. Like we went whole summers being grounded for fighting. Me and my sister fought a lot.

VO: Cuz you're that close in age, I'm sure...

EV: We were very close in age and we always said we were boys, like we were rough. My sister is six one, so she's a lot taller than I am, she always was taller than I was. She plays basketball so we, yeah, we played hard.

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CL: That's so funny. So I know that you have a house now. Do you like- how do you divie up the housework, or is it all you.

EV: So I live with my boyfriend, and I bought the house so it's a very weird dynamic. I mean, some people do, some people don't—we have been together for four years so he basically pays rent and he has his housework. He does the stuff outside, like mowing the lawn and stuff like that. For the most part I've been so busy the past couple of months since I moved in, I haven't been cleaning, I really haven't. He's been doing everything, he's such a good support system.

CL: That's very good.

EV: Because I won't get home sometimes til like nine or ten at night and I'm just exhausted and I just want to go to sleep and then Sunday I sleep all day long and I'm like ok now I need to get up and do laundry. But he helps a lot with that.

CL: That's very good.

VO: What are the pros and cons of the path that you've chosen in the restaurant business?

EV: The pro is I'm 23 and I own a business and...

VO: That's pretty cool.

EV: It's cool. The cons... I could go on and on about the cons. I had to grow up really fast. When I turned 21, the next day I had to go to work. I didn't get that whole, like, go out drinking. I had work a lot. I lost a lot of friends and a lot of people don't understand. I mean at 20 I don't think I understood, I just gave up a lot. I gave up a social life, I gave up...yeah. You give up a lot is what the cons are. The pros are you get a lot. I have such a great clientele and they come in every weekend. They're just awesome and I've met a lot of people. I've got to create great relationships with some of my vendors and stuff like that so you've got those pros and you've got the cons so they definitely weigh out each other, but the cons...there's a lot and I think a lot of restaurant owners and bakery owners do know that but you do have those pros you look forward to everyday.

CL: Yeah. It's nice to buy your own house at 23 years old.

EV: Yes, I was very set on a house. I don't want to rent anymore as you've probably figured out, renting sucks. And I just started saving and saving and saving and saving and I live out in North Brookfield so it's way far out in the woods and I also just wanted to have a place to myself. It's a small little house, it's not like it's huge, but it's nice to just go home and not have to worry about anything and if something's broken I can just fix it now, which still sucks, it's like damn I have to go fix something. But....

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VO: You like being independent like that.

EV: Yeah, I've always been very, very independent. I love my boyfriend, don't get me wrong, but I don't need a man or something like that. I love to be independent. I've just always been like that. I love the fact that I can be like, "Yeah, I bought a house at 23," like I find it so mind-boggling.

CL: Us, too. [laughs]

VO: Could not relate unfortunately, yikes.

CL: How do you feel about the choices in your life and do you have any regrets? Deep question right there.

EV: I don't know if I regret anything, there are days where I do regret it. Like, this past weekend was my sister's 21st and I was so out of my element when they went to the club and stuff. I was like, "What am I doing here?" But, then I come in the next day and I'm like ok I have orders to fulfill and I'm my business is growing and I don't know if I would say I absolutely regret anything because the restaurant industry is a complete hit or miss. You may fail and you may succeed. There may be years where you do fail and you have to get through that year. The first year that I started was tough. It was very very tough and you just have to put a smile on your face and get through it. But, even like thinking about right now I don't have any regrets. I'm so grateful to have what I have right now. It's weird to think even a 23 year old, did I see my life going this way? Absolutely not, but I did so.

V: I know that you rent the bakery, so you fulfill the orders, so do you have anyone that helps you fulfill...

E: As of right now it's me and one other person. She works Friday and Saturday. She helps me make the bread. She does a few other things, like she helps me with the bars and stuff that we have in the case, but for the most part it's just me. I do all the cake decorating, I do all of our weddings. She is more of a baker. She's been here since the start. She legitimately saves my ass constantly. I'll be like, "Can you do this for me because I need extra help." So she works anywhere between 10-15 hours a week. She has a small kid at home, so she gets to go out, which is nice for her, but she has helped me with so much. So as of right now it's just us two. I mean, we like the girl at the front counter she works at the restaurant and the bakery on Saturday mornings, and if we ever go to an event, I bring her along, but for the most part for the baking it's just me. And her name is Katie. When I have to turn people away, I can't fulfill their order because I have to at least sleep for an hour or two a night, just let me sleep for the night, or I can't fit it in the fridge. I feel that actually now a days like don't understand. They're like why can't you fulfill my order, because we can't possibly fit anymore stuff in our fridge, and I personally love, there are multiple people who are like, "When are you gonna hire someone,"

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and I'm like, "I don't know." Right now, we are comfortable with what we are doing so I just keep doing it.

CL: I also feel like there's such a huge trust thing because it's your business your brand...

VO: Your baby

CL: ...so it's like your name that's getting put out there, so you want to be sure it's good

EV: I have major trust for Katie like I said, she started with us three years ago. She makes amazing breads and she's really good at that. I mean, if I tell her what she needs to do, she's really good and she just does it, so we have a very good trust between us. When it comes to the cakes, yeah, I have major trust issues. Even with the girls at the counter I'm like, are you sure you can carry this cake to the customer, because if they drop it I have to pay for it. Knock on wood, that's never happened. I'll do one to six wedding cakes a weekend and I deliver every single one myself.

CL: Oh my god

EV: I can't even think like what if someone else brings it. So, yeah, it's a huge trust issue, which a lot of people in the restaurant industry get is you do have to have a lot of trust and it's hard, because there are some people that do try to screw you over certainly.

VO: Really?

EV: Yeah, sometimes they don't mean it but it happens

VO: When you say screw over do you mean like, in what sense

EV: So, an example I don't want to throw anyone under the bus, but my dad ended up taking a partner on and they opened a restaurant together and things went south, and my dad had to sell the business because of it. Yeah, which he always says you live and you learn. You try and trust people, but sometimes you get burned in the process

VO: Right

CL: For sure

EV: But, it's gonna happen no matter what especially in this industry. It's cut throat legitimately so it's gonna happen, but you do find those select few that, like the woman that works for me, she was one of those people that I know I can trust.

CL: Do you consider yourself active politically?

VO: Yeah it's a huge shift (laughter) they have it sectioned off (laughter)

EV: No, I grew up in a household where they were divided in that sense. Nowadays I own a business, so I try and stay out of it. I have my beliefs. I don't put it on social media and I keep it to myself. And a lot of people these days don't, and I feel like, I don't want to say anything

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wrong, but I feel like that's why our country is divided. And that's what sucks, I don't know a lot, but I try to know.

VO: You are busy all the time so it's kind of hard to like

EV: Yes and no, like I hear people talk about it and I just yeah.

CL: Just try to focus more on the business

EV: And when you have a business you do need to know a little about politics, because it is going to affect you and what's been happening with minimum wage, and that's going up to 15 dollars an hour and that's going to kill small business owners which sucks, which is going to be a gradual thing. I don't even know how long it's going to—I think it's going to be an every year process.

VO: Yeah, I think it is

EV: Some people don't think about that. You have small businesses and you can't. A lot of the time you have to keep your mouth shut, because you say one small thing and something is going to blow up in your face. And I have customers who have different sides; some support one side some support a different side, so the best way is to keep your mouth shut. And I do have very strong beliefs in some things, and I don't keep my mouth shut on that but that's all I'm going to say about that

CL: [Laughs] okay.

VO: Let's see, have you been involved in volunteer or community group?

EV: A lot of time, like right now in our business we do a lot of charitable work. We love to work with the veterans; we are very much about the military. My boyfriend is in the military, my dad was in the military, I have a lot of friends in the military. Like next week—oh it's this weekend—we do a golf tournament for a big charity every year. Last year, we did this huge event for veterans and all the proceeds went to the veteran shelter in Worcester, and we usually we take the money and buy what's on their wish list: t-shirts, flip-flops, things like that. I bring food to them when I have extra food, my extra donuts on Sunday morning I don't want them to go stale, so I just bring it to them. Then, every once in a while, we try and do like local schools like if they need a raffle prize, we will give them a gift card, like our local police department, fire department. We are very geared towards being local. We try and support our own local places and a big part is our veterans. That's something I strongly believe in and this golf tournament. We also do what is it called, I think it's called Pancreatic Alliance I don't even know, I can't remember what it's called. I call him my uncle, but it's a really good friend of ours, and he died from pancreatic cancer last year, and this year we're doing a huge golf tournament in his name and we're going to do the proceeds to his charity that he used to work for. I don't like talking about it so it's hard sometimes.

VO: It's okay.

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EV: We try to do as much as we can being a small business, you can't do as much as you want, but those small events that we do, someday we'll have a moon bounce out for the kids, we'll have bands, a farmer's market, and we'll have people calling and we have dinner as one big happy family.

CL: Wow.

EV: So, it's fun.

CL: Was that something your dad did before...

EV: Yeah

CL: ...or was it more like your thing

EV: Before I got involved he did a lot of golf tournaments, he likes to golf, it's his thing. Then, the golf tournament this year, his name was Brian, he was very much, he was my dad's best friend. So, he ran the golf tournaments. They would do it together and he would do a lot. It was a lot more geared to the veterans' stuff. My dad loves giving back to the veterans and seeing them get what they need. And then my dad, when I was in school, he made sure whatever the schools needed for the events we did like you'll have people every once-in-a-while come in looking for gift cards for their golf tournament. We try to do as much as we can, but obviously we can't do everything, but he was—he still is very big about the community, so, again, we try to do as much as we can.

CL: What role has religion played in your life

EV: Not much, I'm Catholic, I was baptized I was confirmed, but...

VO: Yeah, it's one of those personal things.

EV: ...one of those things that, again I'm Catholic and I go to church sometimes, but it's not like I am a very big part of it.

CL: So, we are gonna switch over topics to health now.

VO: How has health issues impacted your life or those in your family?

EV: I've been very fortunate to have, my close family has been pretty healthy, my grandmother on my mom's side had breast cancer twice before I was born. She fought it, she won twice. Obviously like I said, I call him my uncle, he lost his battle with pancreatic cancer after seven years. I've been very fortunate that the people around me, again knock on wood, but we've always been a very active family. Like my mom, to a point she was a little unhealthy and she didn't like it, so she lost 100 pounds. So, we've always lived a very healthy lifestyle. I mean, I'm not that healthy I'm a baker, but....

VO: I would have a hard time being a baker I'll let you know [laughter]

CL: What are your experiences in accessing quality, affordable healthcare

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EV: I mean I'm still on my parent's healthcare.

CL: Oh, that's true.

EV: But, like I said, in three years, right now I don't have dental care because I'm out of my parent's house and I'm not in college, so there's that. When it comes to the restaurant industry, it is horrible to get your own healthcare. So, for other companies, it is hard for them to be able to afford healthcare, and we can't afford our own healthcare, which sucks, and I wish that could change. Like, my mom works for national [inaudible] so they have and can afford healthcare for their employees. I wish it was more affordable where I could offer my employees healthcare, because some of them have children and stuff like that. I mean, I'm lucky that I'm still 23 and I don't have to deal with that yet. But when the time comes I have no clue what I'm going to do. I'll figure it out.

VO: So, companies don't give small businesses like healthcare?

EV: It's very expensive, you end up having to pay a stupid amount of money. I said something to my father and he said I've got three years to figure this out. Being a pastry chef you kind of need healthcare because stuff can go wrong.

VO: Right.

EV: I mean, again knock on wood I haven't done anything yet, but he's looked into it a few times for a few past employees that we've had here for a few years, but it just gets too expensive. Where for us, and them, it's not worth it. I know that Massachusetts has a really good health program where you can sign up for it.

CL: Yeah

EV: And it sucks, and I wish something politically I don't know where—it needs to be changed, especially for small businesses it's hard. It's expensive and small businesses already are struggling for stuff so it's just adding an extra burden it's hard. It's something that I wish could be more affordable trust me I wish. Because I don't want to look forward to that.

VO: Let's see, so you said you were on your parent's healthcare, who do you get it from like your mom?

EV: My mom, so my parents are lucky enough one's in corporate, so she can get healthcare for us. But some people are not lucky enough so that sucks.

CL: How do you get through tough times and how do you get thoughts keep you going?

EV: Definitely my support system. My boyfriend has definitely been through it since the beginning, so he's kind of been thrown in it since we've been dating. So, it's very hard for me to let go of things, and that's one of my weaknesses. If I have a customer that wasn't happy or something, which doesn't happen often, but it sticks with me and I try to fix it as much as I can. I was a very happy kid growing up, and a very outgoing person like I would go right up to people and say hi. When I first got started, I got into a very dark place, and it was very hard to get out of

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it. The first year of business is hard, and a lot of people say that it's very hard. You spend a lot of hours and you don't get a lot out of it. So, again I was very lucky to have a great support system behind me, and they helped me get out of it. There are those days where I need to take a breath and walk away from everything, but it's hard to own a business and walk away from everything. Some days, I just try and step back. Sundays both the bakery and the restaurant are closed so those are usually the days where—like I watched football yesterday and I just try and forget about everything. For me, I always look forward, I never look back. I do look backwards, I try and look forward as much as I can and think about what I can achieve in the future, especially with everything growing right now. Being a woman right now is awesome.

VO: Same here

EV: So, I try and think about that as much as possible, and like I said I lean on my boyfriend and my parents and my sister a lot. And they're always there to catch me.

VO: How did you meet your boyfriend?

EV: Through mutual friends. It was very weird, so he's a few years older than I am so I was actually really good friends with his sister in high school and I knew she had an older brother. I was in my second year of college and I was home for the summer and we actually went to the Spencer fair. And we kind of just met through mutual friends and it's weird because sometimes you have all these worlds clash and it's like, "How did you know them?" and "How did I not meet you before this?" It was weird but now we've been together for four years.

CL: How do you define success in your life, and has this definition changed over time?

EV: Definitely, it's definitely changed. I'm not going to say I'm successful right now because I want to be more successful. I want to succeed, and I've gotten through the first hump of business, but there are always going to be those hurdles that you have to get through constantly.

VO: So, based on your life experience what advice would you give women today and to future generations

EV: Keep working. Work work work. Nothing comes without work. You've got to believe in yourself if you push through it. You are always going to have headaches. Always always always going to have headaches, you just got to push through it and look into the future and don't look back.

CL: Now that we are working to tell a story that has been recorded and worked on in the past what should we be sure to include?

EV: Wait what

CL: Yeah that's a confusing question

VO: That is a weird question

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CL: We are just gonna skip over that one, I was reading it and I was like maybe she'll get it if I say it

VO: I think what it's trying to say, like the whole premise of the project the whole point of it is to get like all women's experiences like in all realms of life so it's just trying to like, yeah I don't know we are just gonna skip it. We're trying to recite it but-

EV: No, it's okay [laughs] it's alright.

VO: Just gonna cross that one off. Alright, is there anyone else you suggest we talk to, that doesn't make any sense either.

EV: Like referrals

CL: Anyone else inspire you or inspiring women

VO: Oh yeah inspiring women.

EV: I don't know.

CL: Maybe Katie, Kate

EV: Katie yeah, I mean, I don't think she grew up in Worcester to be honest. So, I know yeah, her parents are from North Carolina, so I don't know. She's a very quiet person herself so I don't ask a lot of questions. I mean, I don't know if you've ever heard of Val's restaurant.

VO & CL: That's my (her) name

VO: That's funny because I just heard about it today.

EV: She has been in business for I don't know how long and she's been, again excuse my language, she's badass. She keeps growing over there, and keeps at it so I definitely recommend seeing her.

VO: Well we should go

CL: Yeah, your name is Val

VO: [laugh]) it's meant to be I have to meet her.

CL: How were girls treated in your college?

EV: I was a part of the baking and cooking program. You do have a few select men who like doing that type of stuff and the restaurant industry, it is definitely completely divided. I mean we do have a few women that work in the kitchen. The thing is it is now changing, which I think should be fine, but I am very headstrong, and you are not going to mess with me. I've always been that way. My father raised me that way. He's like, "Have a tough skin, you'll be fine, and fight for what you believe in." So, I was never really bothered by anything so I can definitely tell you from what I've seen that it's definitely not great, and it's now changing because women are showing what they can do, and some of the time they can do really good stuff. Especially in the

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restaurant industry, it's got more and more women business owners and restaurants and awesome bakeries coming up so props to them.

VO: Well I'll do a last one here since this one here seems to be kind of general. I know you said you like to relax on Sunday's, watch football, are there any other hobbies or leisurely activities you like to do kind of like going along with interests.

EV: I love the beach, so as much of the time I can get away, it's very rarely. My parents own a house in Rhode Island, so during the summer we like to try and go there at least one to two weekends. And then every, well this will be my second year if I go on vacation, just try to go to Florida just to get away for a week. I used to like to go in January, but as most people know in the restaurant industry it's really hard to get away. You have to trust everyone to stay open, so for the most part it's like those day trips or little weekend trips, I don't have any hobbies. I love to work, yeah it gets stressful, but I'm like—most people are always like you're money hungry you love to work—I totally am. I just want to keep going and see where it can get me. I'm excited for my future.

CL: That's incredible, thank you so much for meeting with us.

EV: Thank you guys!

VO: I know, I'm so inspired now .