

# Baking for bodily autonomy: Nan Wiener tackles controversial end of Roe v. Wade with brownies, macaroons, muffins and more

## Description

default watermark

SENIOR BEAT GUEST COLUMN â?? Many years ago, I spent a year baking desserts in a restaurant in Brooklyn, New York, and Iâ??ve been doing it on an amateur basis ever since. Periodically, the daughter of a dear friendâ??whoâ??s also my daughterâ??s close friendâ??urged me to bake professionally again, but I never wanted to. Itâ??s hard work. Bakersâ?? hours alone were enough to discourage me. Bakers wake up at some ungodly hour to bake fresh for the day, and if Iâ??d ever had to get up early to earn a living, I wasnâ??t going to get rich (not that I did as a journalist, but thatâ??s another story).

But then, in 2022, the Supreme Court issued the Dobbs decision, and just like that, womenâ??s right to an abortion â?? a right that had been in place for 50 years â?? was gone. It was the first time the Supreme Court had *ever* rescinded a lawfully granted right.



Nan Wiener, front, with her partner, Zoe Stricker. (Photo courtesy of My Bakery My Choice)

Having been a college student in the 1970s when Roe v. Wade was enacted, I could not believe we were suddenly back where we started. I still canâ??t believe it. Bodily autonomy out the window. Illegal abortions. Women dying from a lack of reproductive care. Itâ??s truly stunning how awful the whole thing is.

At that point, I had been more or less retired from a career as a book and magazine editor and was looking for something meaningful to do. So, when my friendâ??s daughter called me to say she was planning to have a bake sale in the park to raise money for abortion access funds, did I want to help? I was all in.

## The menu

I looked over my recipes and came up with five or six that I thought were unusualâ??and unusually good. I made frosted brownies, raspberry shortbread with raspberry jam filling, snickerdoodle donut muffins, molasses cookies, an insanely delicious version of macaroons that are loaded with butter, and chocolate peanut butter cookies. And with todayâ??s dietary restrictions in mind, I added vegan pumpkin bread with non-dairy chocolate chips and a gluten-free mochi muffin. I loaded up a cart with the goodies and lugged them to Duboce Park.

draft watermark

We sold out that first day. One hundred percent of the profits went to the National Network of Abortion Access Funds, which helps people find abortion providers and manage fees associated with the procedure, including childcare, lodging, and travel. We earmarked the money specifically for an abortion fund that services five states in the Southeast, where abortion care was particularly scarce.

The best thing about that day was how incredibly enthusiastic the customers were. So many thank us for doing what we were doing. So, we decided to keep going.

But first, we had to have a name, and thatâ??s where my husbandâ??s family came in. Theyâ??re all dedicated wordsmiths, and when I posed the question in a family Zoom call, my sister-in-law came up with one right off the bat: My Bakery, My Choice. Perfect.

## Making it official

Then we had to figure out how to make it an official businessâ??specifically, a cottage food operation, which means one based in your own home. Thatâ??s where the red tape came in. First, I had to have my kitchen certified by the Public Health Department, which included submitting a hand-drawn layout. (I still donâ??t know what they were looking for, other than an assurance that the baking area isnâ??t right next to the garbage.)

I also had to take an online class in food management, where I learned all kinds of clever safety tips, like the right order for storing things in the fridge (anything drippy goes on the bottom shelf) and how hot the water needs to be to get things truly sanitized (180 degrees).




Then, to set up the actual business, I was lucky enough to be referred to the University of California-Berkeley School. of Law. They run a free clinic for young (well, mostly), would-be entrepreneurs, giving advice on all the arcane rules and regulations you need to follow. The generous folks at the clinic saved us literally thousands of dollars in legal fees.

Once we were up and running, we had to figure out how to get customers. Cottage food operators must sell directly to the consumer, which these days mostly means online, so you have to build up a presence on social mediaâ??something I knew I was too tech-illiterate to do. I hired someone to design a website for us, where we take orders (mybakerymychoice.org). But apparently, Instagram is where all the cool kids advertise, and we were stuck on that until an eager young volunteer, for whom this stuff is second nature, showed up and took the reins.

Believe it or not, weâ??re still trying to figure out the maze of local laws that determine where you can and canâ??t sell outside. Weâ??re also trying to build up a catering option. Just last weekend, we were hired for two events, for which I had to make 550 portions of dessert. (Never again.)

## Hoping for the end

One was for an organization called TEACH, which held an evening of what they called â??Abortion Storytellingâ?• at the Brava Theater. The other was the San Francisco Opera, which was debuting its

production of *The Handmaidâ??s Tale* and saw us as a great tie-in.

> In a story aired April 17, 2024, KPIX (CBS News Bay Area) mentions the bakery started by Wiener and a friend to raise funds to help women get access to abortion in states where it is being banned or restricted.

All of this is very exciting, but, of course, my partner, Zoe Stricker, had it right when she was asked what she saw as the future of the bakery. A few months back, the local CBS TV station included our effort in a story about Arizonaâ??s abortion ban. Asked what was our ultimate goal, my partner said it was to get to a point where the business wasnâ??t necessary. Weâ??d gladly give it up to have Roe codified as federal law, which Kamala Harrisâ??our next president, please godâ??is promising to do.

But even if that happens, securing an abortion has never been easy for millions of women for so many reasonsâ??thereâ??s no clinic nearby or they donâ??t have the money or the wherewithal to get oneâ??and thatâ??s not likely to change anytime soon. So, weâ??ll keep on baking and, as we say in our logo, â??supporting access to abortion, one bite at a time.â?•

default watermark

**Category**

1. All Posts

**Date Created**
02/10/2024
**Author**
nan-wiener