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## Cottage Industries Thrive In Face Of Pandemic

By Amy Orr  
Contributor  
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Aliye Aydin stands with her Spice Club offerings at the Long Beach Marina Farmer's Market.

—Photo courtesy Michell Maher

With mandated restaurant closures and supply chain struggles, 2020 has been devastating for many people in the food service industry. But for some, this year's "safer-at-home" restrictions have offered an impetus to explore new opportunities.

Since 2013, California has allowed the preparation and packaging of food in non-commercial kitchens. Within certain parameters, the state's "cottage food law" permits chefs to cook from home. In Long Beach, several home-based businesses began to blossom during the COVID-19

quarantine.

Sean Loughlin worked as a photographer before the pandemic. Being at high risk for contracting COVID-19, he was unable to continue taking photos. A food lover in need of work, Laughlin started baking and the Loaflin Bread Company was born. His menu offers intriguing varieties of focaccia and sourdough bread for one-time purchase or weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly subscriptions.

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Laughlin is now in the kitchen at 5 a.m. each day. His wife, Mimi Masher, handles the business details, including sales, marketing, packaging and deliveries.

“The bread is actually very delicious,” Masher said. “He is very diligent and attentive to details and those are great qualities in a baker.”

Baking has also proved to be an outlet for Alina Tompert. A full-time architect with Studio One Eleven, Tompert decided to embrace her German roots while working from home. Zimt Bakery, named in honor of Tompert’s favorite spice, cinnamon, launched in July. Nougats, nuts, jams, and gingerbread are some of the options available in her artisanal cookies.

Committed to social change, Tompert looks for local, organic, free trade ingredients, uses completely compostable packaging, and donates 20% of her baking profits to East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice.

Tompert grew up helping her mom in the kitchen and said she has vivid memories of peering over the counter on tiptoes and kneading butter into the Plätzchen dough. Every Christmas, her “Oma” would send a tin of treats from Germany. Tompert honors and expands on her



family recipes in her selections of carefully crafted cookies.

Family heritage is also at the core of Aliye Aydin's cooking. Summer trips to visit her father's family in Turkey fostered a lifelong appreciation for Middle Eastern dishes and spice blends.

"Food is my love language, and I love exploring flavor," Aydin said.

Aydin studied nutrition and urban agriculture at UC Berkeley, went on to culinary school, and became a professional chef. A firm believer in the benefits of natural, wholesome food, she decided to share her culinary passion through membership in a menu prep and meal planning group called A Good Carrot.

Aydin's recipes grew popular and so did her special seasonings. In March 2019, she started a second home-based service, the Spice Club. Her flavor combinations include a range of Turkish, Moroccan, Cuban, and Indian spices. Special, seasonal blends are only available to club members.

In addition to running small businesses, Laughlin, Tompert, and Aydin are now exploring another aspect of at-home offerings: online instruction. All three are slated to teach online cooking classes through Long Beach Food and Beverage. Tompert has already led two virtual programs.

"It has been really fun connecting with friends and family, as well as new faces in these classes," she said. "So far, everyone's results seemed to have turned out very well."

To learn more about online cooking classes, go to [www.lbfoodandbeverage.org](http://www.lbfoodandbeverage.org). For information on Loaflin Bread Company visit [www.loaflinbread.co](http://www.loaflinbread.co), for Zimt Bakery visit [www.zimt.com](http://www.zimt.com), for A Good Carrot visit [www.agoodcarrot.com](http://www.agoodcarrot.com), and for Spice Club visit [www.joyofspices.com](http://www.joyofspices.com).

