

ELIZABETH PINK BOX STORIES SOTELO

Interview with
Mayly Tso

LA's Donut Princess



BACKGROUND

Mayly Tao's parents were Cambodian refugees fleeing from the Khmer Rouge when they came to America. With the help of Uncle Ted, the Donut King, Mayly's parents opened up their own shop: DK Donuts and Bakery in Santa Monica, Ca.

After graduating from UC San Diego, Mayly came back to her Donut Kid roots, embracing her role as the Donut Princess by bringing new creations to the donut shop.





COMMUNITY SUPPORT

From the age of 6, Mayly began helping her parents run the shop standing on a milkcrate to reach the counter. From there, she saw DK Donuts be like a community center, providing an open space 24/7/365 for neighbors to gather and share about their lives

With donuts as a favorite go-to for sport events, church organizations, and non-profits, DK Donuts was always a part of the community. Mayly reciprocated this support during the pandemic.

Community Effort **DK SHOP**

From the donut shop's wide menu options, they were able to provide grocery items to the neighborhood as an alternative to regular grocery stores during the pandemic.

They also delivered groceries to local residents in nearby retirement homes.



Community Effort

Lunchboxes for Love

A community-effort made possible through donations, DK Donuts and Bakery served donuts, coffee, and sandwiches to healthcare workers in Los Angeles.

With all of the support, they were able to provide over 1,200 meals to more than 20 hospitals.





community EFFORT

Virtual Sandwich Shop

With an online ordering system already in place, the shop was able to pivot to online orders, including a virtual sandwich shop. In order to boost up spirits during these trying times, some nostalgic sandwiches were added to the menu.

Since then, DK Donuts was sold to new owners in 2021. Now, Mayly has pivoted to an online gourmet donut delivery business called Donut Princess LA with new creations like the donut bouquet!

Through sharing her story, Mayly hopes to inspire others in the Asian American community to do so as well.



← OUT NOW

Book: An American Dream, with Sprinkles

Podcast: Short N' Sweet: A DonutPrincess Podcast

Documentary: The Donut King



IN THE WORKS →

Podcast: The Killing Field of LA, coming August 23

Animated Series: More Info Coming Soon

THANK YOU

Sources:

<https://www.maylytao.com/>

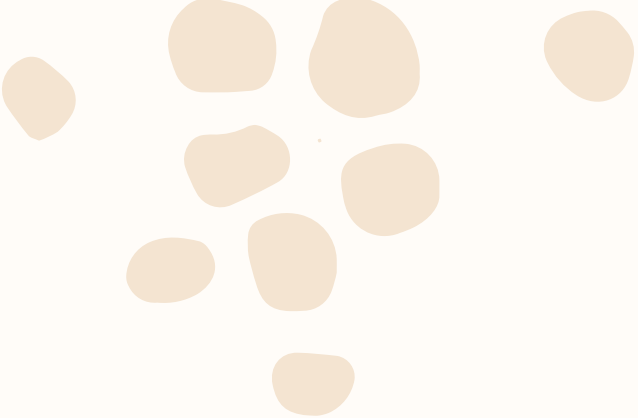
<https://www.donutprincessla.com/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?>

[v=PWPStTPwzyo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWPStTPwzyo)

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“Donut Kid”

Andrew Hearn

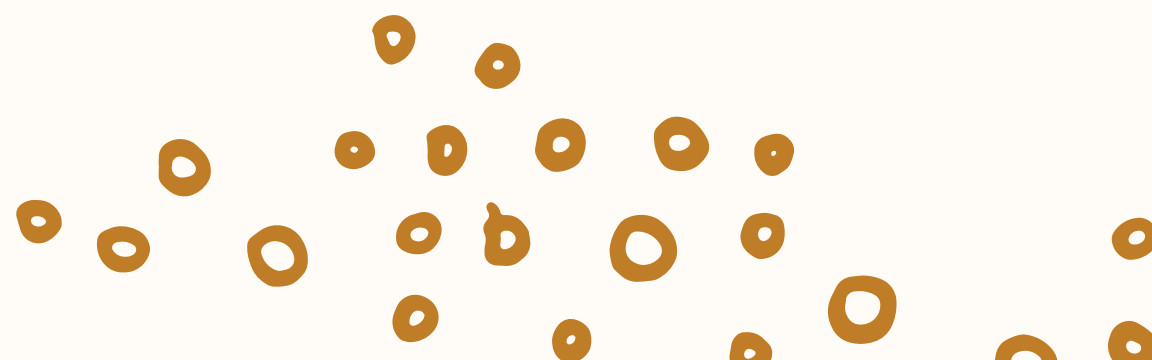
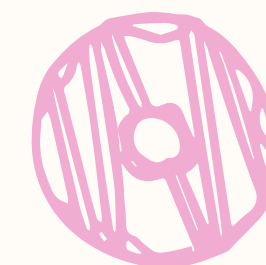
Pink Box Stories



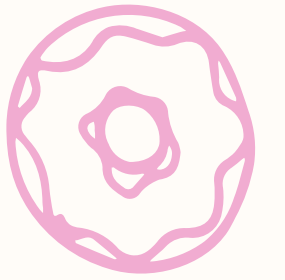
Immigration

A long journey from home

Andrew was born and raised in the U.S., but his parents immigrated from Cambodia. His mother was one of the thousands of immigrants who fled after the fall of Khmer Rouge regime in the late 1970s.

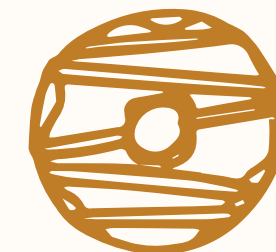


Khmer Rouge



Cambodian Genocide

The Khmer Rouge regime, led by Pol Pot, ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. It implemented a radical form of agrarian communism, forcibly evacuating cities and sending the population to rural labor camps. The regime aimed to create a classless, agrarian society, abolishing money, private property, and religion. This period was marked by widespread persecution, forced labor, and mass executions, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 1.5 to 2 million people, or about a quarter of Cambodia's population.



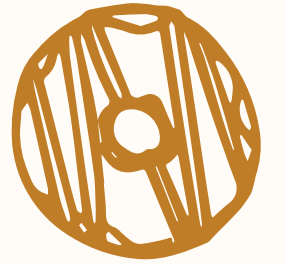
Higher Education

Exchange student

Andrew's father moved to the United States in the early 1970s as an exchange student to study engineering. After arriving, he realized he could not return to Cambodia due to the Khmer Rouge regime. He subsequently applied for an immigration adjustment and became a U.S. citizen.



Then There Were Two



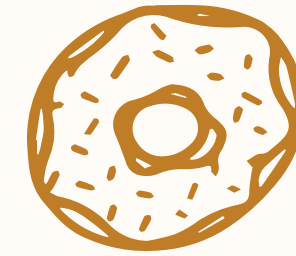
Happily, Ever After

Andrew's parents were introduced by a family member and quickly fell in love, leading to their marriage. Despite their distinct immigration paths to the United States, both left their beloved country in search of new opportunities, like countless hardworking immigrants.

This pursuit of a better life ultimately led them to purchase a donut shop in Inglewood, California, where they embraced their entrepreneurial spirit and built a new future together.

Running a business

Trial and Error



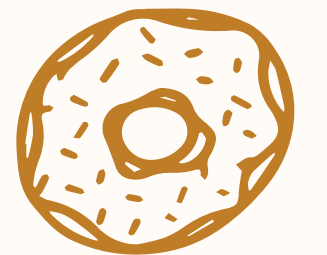
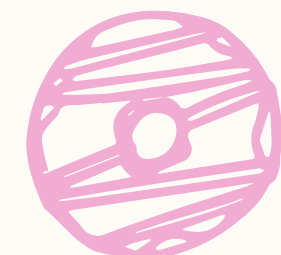
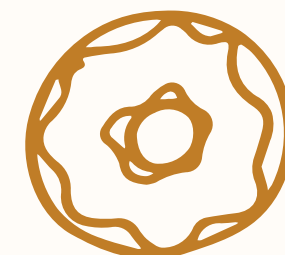
For many Cambodian immigrants like Andrew's parents, entering the donut shop business in the U.S. proved to be a feasible path to economic stability, thanks to a unique convergence of social and economic factors. Guided by a knowledgeable business partner, they quickly mastered the essentials of donut-making, from sourcing pre-packaged mixes and glazes to perfecting the art of creating these delicious morsels. Through perseverance and hard work, they perfected crucial skills in budgeting, inventory management, and time allocation, transforming their small shop into a thriving business.

This success story exemplifies the remarkable resilience and adaptability of immigrants who, having survived the horrors of genocide, applied their innate resourcefulness and innovative spirit to build a new life in America. Their journey from refugees to successful business owners is a testament to the transformative power of determination to achieve the American dream.

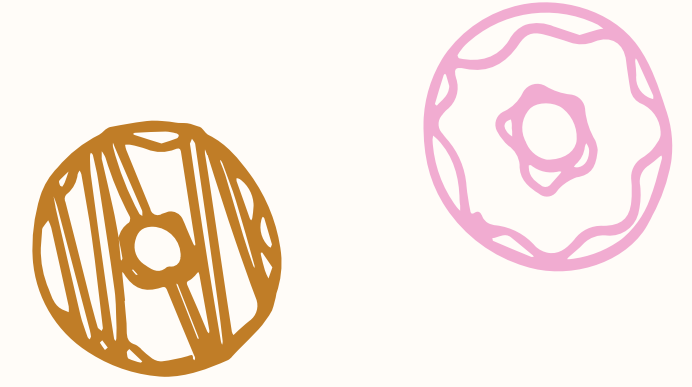
Growing up in a donut shop

The “donut kid”

Growing up as a "donut kid," Andrew's childhood was far from conventional. He spent countless hours helping his parents run their donut shop, with the business becoming an integral part of their family life. Birthdays, Thanksgivings, and Christmases were celebrated amidst the aroma of freshly baked donuts and the hum of kitchen equipment. One particularly vivid memory stands out: a kind-hearted customer sharing homemade white bread with his parents as they ate their Thanksgiving meal atop a flour storage container. This image encapsulates the unique blend of family, business, and community that defined Andrew's foundational years.



In Retrospect



Respect and appreciation

While Andrew sometimes felt he missed out on a "normal" childhood filled with carefree bike rides and family vacations, he now recognizes the invaluable lessons of his unconventional upbringing. The donut shop became a classroom where he learned the importance of hard work, multitasking, and the value of serving one's community.

These experiences shaped his character and work ethic, providing him with a unique set of skills and perspectives that continue to influence his life. Today, Andrew appreciates how his childhood in the family business prepared him for life's challenges and instilled in him a deep understanding of entrepreneurship and community connection. Andrew is a psychiatric pharmacist at UC San Diego Health. He looks forward to opening a private practice in the future.



Works Cited



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growing up as a

DONUT
KID

an interview with Andrew Hean

ANDREW HEEN

Andrew was raised working in his parents' donut shop in Southern California. His parents were Cambodian-American refugees. Andrew currently works as a psychiatric pharmacist.



"When I was five or six, my mom would get me to help her fold the donut boxes. Ever since then, I would be helping with stuff like that as a way for her to give something for her son to do."



"As I got older, I started to get more annoyed because I was just kind of like why? Why do I have to be here? I wasn't even getting paid, you know? My mom would give me like \$5 for the weekend or something, which is probably a symbolic thing more than anything. I got annoyed because it felt like I was starting to miss out on being able to hang out with people normally."



"But it was hard trying to say like, 'I don't want to keep working,' because you watch your parents do all this physically hard labor all day. *You can see the way their hands are calloused* and messed up from washing all the trays and doing all this other work with their hands. And on top of that, you see them come home and then they still make dinner and do all this other stuff, right?"



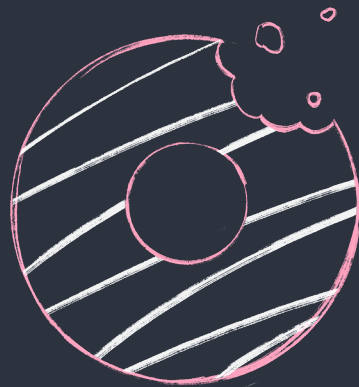
"It wasn't really until I left for college, where I finally had the freedom to do whatever I wanted to do, that I started to appreciate how much the donut shop, for better or for worse, painted like my experience growing up."



Just before the pandemic hit, Andrew's parents sold their donut shop.

"Parents often want their kids to go on and do something beyond. They don't want to have to pass on all that work and what the donut shop symbolizes, which is maybe all that hardship, to their kids. It just seems like there's not as much pride in it being a family business, which makes sense because it's not like donuts are Cambodian. There's no there's no other cultural attachment aside from the context of being Cambodian American."

"Our donut shop was a place in which people gathered. Every time I walk into a mom and pop donut shop in San Diego, it's clear that a lot of the customers there in the morning know the owners and they know each other by name. And that sense of community, where people belong are gathered like that - you don't get that with the corporate donut stores."



From Refugee Roots to Sweet Success

Dorothy Chow's parents were Cambodian refugees who came to America to escape the horrors of the Cambodian Genocide. Their journey to the United States was driven by the desire to find safety and build a new life.

Her father, after opening and running 60 donut shops in his lifetime, decided to start B&H Bakery Distributors to supply other donut shops. This business decision was inspired by his extensive experience in the donut industry and his desire to support other Cambodian families.

Dorothy grew up as a "donut kid," working in the family business from a young age. This hands-on experience, combined with her father's passion and dedication, deeply influenced her decision to continue and expand the family legacy through B&H Bakery Distributors.



Meet Dorothy Chow - VP of B&H Bakery Distributors

<https://medium.com/pinkboxstories>



History of Cambodian Niche in Donuts

The Cambodian refugee community found a unique niche in the donut shop industry. The success of the first few Cambodian-owned donut shops, thanks in part to pioneers like "Ted Ngoy - the donut king," encouraged many other refugees to follow suit, creating a tight-knit community of Cambodian donut shop owners.



Ted Ngoy, known as the "Donut King", was one of the first Cambodians to learn the art of donut making in California. He played a significant role in teaching family members and friends, which contributed to the proliferation of Cambodian-owned donut shops.

AUGUST 2024

Dorothy's Journey & Mission at B&H Bakery Distributors

"We're the only Cambodian-owned distributor supporting local donut shops. It's important for us to maintain the family-run culture and help our community thrive."

-Dorothy Chow



Dorothy's mission with B&H Bakery Distributors is multifaceted, focusing on community support, business modernization, and cultural preservation. Dorothy is committed to carrying on her father's legacy, recognizing the significant efforts he made to build the company from the ground up.

Adapting the business to modern times has been one of Dorothy's main challenges. She has worked tirelessly to introduce new technologies, ensuring B&H Bakery Distributors remains competitive and relevant. For instance, she attends the "International Baking Industry Exposition (IBIE) annually to stay on top of industry trends. Despite these challenges, Dorothy finds immense reward in her work.

Dhow offers invaluable advice to aspiring entrepreneurs, especially within the Cambodian community. She emphasizes the importance of seeking insights from experienced business owners before diving into entrepreneurship. "Anybody thinking of being an entrepreneur should try to interview as many other entrepreneurs as possible," she advises. Dorothy cautions against being swayed by the glamorous portrayal of entrepreneurship on social media, highlighting that running a business requires a specific skill set and resilience.



Through her efforts, Dorothy not only supports the business growth but also preserves and promotes the cultural heritage of the Cambodian community. Her dedication is also evident in her podcast "Death in Cambodia, Life in America", where she spreads awareness about the Cambodian Genocide and emphasizes the importance of cultural preservation.



"The most rewarding part is being able to be around Cambodian people and serve them, not just letting them be monopolized."

-Dorothy Chow