

THE PSBJ INTERVIEW

Mixing the marijuana right into the munchies

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Mel Curtis

Jody Hall is best-known for her cupcake shops, but her new cannabis venture, Goodship Co., is growing fast.

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As the nascent legal marijuana industry gains ground, [Jody Hall](#) is among those leading the way. A trailblazer in last decade's artisan-cupcake gold rush, Hall forges an equally bold path with her newest venture. The Goodship produces high-end cannabis-infused goodies, such as a \$10 Saigon Cinnamon Snickerdoodle Cookie, which are sold at recreational marijuana shops around the state. Hall cut her teeth at Starbucks, where she helped [Howard Schultz](#) transform another commodity — coffee — into a profitable global brand.

So, let's talk about pot. This is an interesting time to have a seat at the table and influence how the future will be defined. Marijuana allows you to disconnect in order to reconnect – to build a stronger focus and connect differently to people and food, nature and the world around you.

What's the Goodship, and how do I get a ticket to board it? The Goodship is about building a fun, sophisticated, trusted brand that inspires human connection, just like we did with cupcakes. There's not a whole lot like it in the marketplace. Our vision for Goodship is highly creative. In addition to making cannabis cookies and chocolate bars, we're starting a monthly speaker series as part of the Goodship Academy of "Higher" Education. We're going to curate mind-blowing topics around art, science and literature. Our first one is Sept. 16, in partnership with [Liz Dunn](#), Chophouse Row and the Stranger. It will be held at the Cloud Room and feature Blaise Agüera y Arcas, who works on machine learning and artificial intelligence at Google and has done several Ted Talks. We'll ask guests to come "pre-boarded" since we are not allowed to serve or giveaway pot edibles according to the law. But we will serve local snacks that taste really great when you're a little stoned.

What's the biggest mistake you've made as CEO of Cupcake Royale? In the first five years we were lean and did well. We reinvested profit back into the company for expansion. But when the coffee business started going to niche coffee providers popping up all over the place, we had to adjust. At that point I realized we should have been saving more. I hadn't been rigorous about the finances. I wish I had been more mindful about costs around labor, cost of ingredients, wasting too much product. Those kinds of things can drown a business like mine. Now we are way more dialed in and running a strong business. We've added products like pairing cupcakes with their best friend: artisan ice cream.

What does the future hold for cupcakes? Our biz is up more than 13 percent over last year. Even though the Wall Street Journal declared cupcakes are dead, cake is a food that we celebrate around (i.e., weddings, birthdays.) At Cupcake, we continue to innovate with flavors and ingredients from local farms. We will have some new, exciting locations, and we're venturing into new lines of business. We're testing Rodeo Donuts – a hand-made doughnut company.

What's your perspective on the \$15 minimum wage? It's important to have a livable wage. It's regretful our country has ignored that for the last 35 years and hasn't increased wages in line with the economy. Some may call \$15 an hour a livable wage or not, but being part of the leadership to push that through is great and scary. We need the rest of the state to come along with us, which will put pressure on other states and the rest of the U.S. It's the right thing to do, but if your empire is in Seattle, it's a huge price increase to the business. We need the big national guys to do their part. I will have \$1 million a year in added payroll expenses, which makes me hopeful and scared. We'll do our best to do minimal price increases to get through this.

What's been a defining moment in your career? It's been interesting that a little cupcake shop owner like me was invited into important conversations around a building a stronger economy, health care reform, or creating strong societies that take care of people. I was invited to the White House to discuss the impact of these issues on small business.