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BLOG



It Takes a Village, Meet Yours: Wackym's Kitchen

Written by Aimee Blinder, Coppell Farmers Market (CFM) Committee Member and Creative Writer.

In our interview series, *It Takes A Village, Meet Yours*, we take time out to meet with a variety of our cherished and beloved vendors where they share interesting and fun perspectives on their lives.

If you've been to CFM, then you most definitely know our next vendor spotlight. Paul from Wackym's Kitchen is known for his creative and colorful hats and in normal times his generous cookie samples (he promises samples will be back post distancing!). As one of our longest standing vendors with nine great years and counting, Wackym's is a treasured anchor of market life and as expected our interview with Paul did not disappoint.

Where were you born and raised? Paul is the perfect combination of Florida born and southern California raised. "Both my parents are from South Carolina. Having grown up traveling in and out of the south prepared me for living in Dallas. Plus, my favorite great uncle lived here his entire life. He was VP of sales and marketing for Mary Kay Cosmetics. He was responsible for the big, splashy sales spectaculars the company is known for. He and Mary Kay started out together making TV commercials in the 50s. My dad was an executive at Disneyland during the 70s, and when the Mary Kay conventions were in California, we would go and get that Mary Kay enthusiasm "all over us" as the song went. As a kid we had Mary Kay and Mel Ash to the house and took them to Disneyland. They were lovely folks."



Paul Wackym at the Coppell Farmers Market. Photo by Abigail Paxton Photography.

What does Texas pride mean to you? "Goodness. Texas pride means a strong belief is family, community, and traditions – and all of those things are really important to me and to Wackym's Kitchen. I am proud to call Texas home."

Is there a particular family tradition that stands out in your life? "A favorite to this day is See's Candy and pistachios around the Christmas tree. When we first moved to central California in the late 60's I was given my own one-pound box by a neighbor for Christmas. My father is Lebanese, and he enjoyed the rare bag of dyed-red imported pistachios (back in the day that was the only way you could get them). At some point in the 70's, we started buying them for him for Christmas. We'd put on a pot of coffee, gather "trash" bowls for the shells and enjoy a Christmas morning breakfast of See's, pistachios, and coffee while opening presents."

What do you enjoy most about being part of CFM? In one word, "Community", says Paul. With vendor-friends, Amanda, Joseph and Jevon, as well as committee members (who have become friends), his customers (some of which have become friends), and folks who are weekly shoppers, and others whom he knows by sight and simply say "hello". And of course, the CFM dogs who bring their own special joy to the market.

What is the most exciting part of the CFM season for you and why? "Every Saturday morning is an adventure. Oh, and those few weeks in the winter when I don't have to get up at 5:00 am on

Saturday!"

What does it mean to be able to serve the community directly? Paul shared, "To see smiling faces, share samples, chat, tell a story or hear a story. As we have grown as a company, being at the market keeps the entire process of making and selling food a very interactive process. An all-time favorite story was a customer a few years ago at CFM who came back one Saturday and said "Paul, I did what you told me to do. Last Saturday night, myself, my husband, my 80-year-old mother and my grown son were dipping your Margarita cookies in tequila". Since I started making my Margarita cookies nearly 12 years ago, I have playfully told people that "if you dip them in enough tequila, it will get you exactly where you want to go!" I was being silly, I never expected anyone to do it. I could not have written the punchline better myself – she continued "My son got up the next morning and said, "mom, I think I ate too many cookies last night!"

What is your proudest moment so far in regard to your business? When it comes to the growth of the business it was buying a 10,000 square foot building and installing their new kitchen two years ago. But from a people standpoint Paul's treasured story is of a retired elderly couple in their 90's who every 2 weeks they ship a standing order of a custom assorted Platinum Tin as a gift from their daughter. Last year he received a wonderful letter from the couple that said – "Every night my wife and I enjoy 2 of your cookies with a small glass of wine. I was in the food business my entire career, and you are doing something very special. Don't ever change what you do." Paul immediately called the elderly man's daughter, and she asked if Paul had Googled her father, which he had not, and it turns out that he is a retired CEO of Kellogg who invented Pop-Tarts. His endorsement meant everything!

Do you have a nickname and if so what's the story? Paul said, "With a name like Wackym, does one NEED a nickname? Please. I often ask people if they are laughing at my name? And I tell them they should because it's funny. If you're wondering, my great-great-great uncle came to America from Lebanon in 1905. It's an Ellis Island spelling that is derived from the Arabic name."

What is your true north star in life, what guides you? Paul is driven to create and surround himself with beauty and shared, "William Morris said, "Life without art is brutally." Great words to live by."

What is something you are really good at that would surprise most folks? Paul shared two very different secret skills! "I can install a toilet in 10 minutes. I've had more practice than I care to admit. We have 4 in our new building. Or, that I can get a cake made from scratch and in the oven in 10 minutes. Several years ago, I called my parents and thanked them for giving me both skills."



Paul's "Love and Cookies" table banner. Photo by Abigail Paxton Photography.

Do you have a motto you live by? For Paul it's "Never pass up a shopping opportunity. Oh, my, goodness. I am a collector above all. I love my stuff."

Of your peer vendors, what is one of the yummy foods you love to get? Paul most definitely had a lot of favorites to share here. "Every week I take home fresh herbs from Sandy and John with Biscuit Head Baking Co. Oh, the fun I have figuring out how to use copious amounts of herbs that are sometimes new to me. Recently I made a terrific garlicky butternut squash risotto that I finished with an entire bag of thinly sliced sage. For years now Elliot Grows basil has been a pesto staple, earlier in the season this year I made a swell spicy pesto with radish greens from Delanco Farm. Jill's Sundance Gardens scones are the bomb. Yummy cheese from Jersey Girls (and occasionally chocolate milk). And Soco Ginger Beer!"

What stands out for you related to being a part of the CFM family? Simply put, Paul shares its proudly being a part of a talented group of producers who make up the well-curated lineup of vendors at one of the best farmers market in Texas and the country even.

If you could have any performer in the world come and sing at CFM one Saturday, who would it be and what song would you want to hear? A lover of the singer Kate Bush, Paul said, "I'd set up my table, bring a folding chair, put out an honor system coffee can for money and watch her sing for 4 hours. Heck, I'd give away cookies if they booked her for market." Someone better start making calls, free cookies for everyone!

If all of the CFM vendors were part of a band, what instrument would you want to play? No surprise here, Paul says "Conductor. Is there a question?"

In one moment if you could only choose cheese, chocolate, or coffee, which would it be? For Paul it would be Tiramisu since cleverly it has all three at once.

If you could raise any baby animal, what would it be? A lover of cats, Paul said "I like the idea of adopting a rescue cat that might already be grown up, that's why I am such a fan of the Coppell Humane Society. They work hard to place animals who need a loving home." So, sounds like finding an older cat with the heart of a baby kitten may just work.

If you could have any creature comfort upgrade to your CFM vendor stall what would it be? As with most vendors, its comfort first and Paul was no exception, "Massage chair, nap room, AC in the summer and heat in the winter, padded floors, aroma therapy, as a start. Or, just getting back to normal, under the pavilion, elbow to elbow, with hot coffee, cookie samples, and tokens."

Have you ever seen a celebrity at CFM? For Paul, "My favorite celebrity is the next person who steps up to my table to pick their perfect box of cookies."



Wackym's Kitchen Cookies at the Coppell Farmers Market. Photo by Abigail Paxton Photography.



Paul Wackym and the Wackym's Kitchen Cookie booth at the Coppell Farmers Market. Photo by Abigail Paxton Photography.

If you were on a deserted island, what two tools would you want with you? For Paul it would be a fishing pole and an endless supply of waterproof matches.

Do you have a favorite movie or TV show that would surprise people, a guilty pleasure? Paul never tires of Field of Dreams and Schitt's Creek.

If I could grant you a superhero power what would it be? The magic to bring back those who have passed to the prime of their lives, "What a dinner party I'd have filled with family, friends and mentors. All of them heros in my heart."

As our resident pied piper purveyor of treats Paul's interview was just that, a treat. We do hope you enjoyed coming along with us. So, grab a glass of milk, or tequila, and your favorite flavors of Wackym's Kitchen cookies, by visiting Paul on any given Saturday at CFM. Or to keep closer tabs on what's happening in the Kitchen visit them at www.wackymskitchen.com or at their social media pages on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

The Coppell Farmers Market provides groceries year-round and vendors are vetted to ensure they make and grow what they sell, so shoppers can be confident in the quality they receive! **We're asking shoppers to adhere to certain safety precautions, like practicing physical distancing and wearing masks, during this time. Please be familiar with these [guidelines](#) prior to attending.**

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits are accepted at the Coppell Farmers Market.

The market is located at 768 W. Main St. in Old Town Coppell. Open 8am-noon every Saturday.