

THE RISE OF

SMALL STATE PROVISIONS

BY AMBER WILSON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHANIE WELBOURNE STEELE

Kevin Masse has always been drawn to the kitchen, where the rhythm of cooking and baking was at the heart of his upbringing. Growing up in Syracuse, New York, the kitchen was a lively place every night as the family gathered around the table, with quality ingredients always at the center of their meals. His Italian grandmother, too, played a key role in igniting his deep love for food. It was by her side that he first learned to bake with fresh dough, as she lovingly crafted her homemade pizzas for the family to enjoy.

“I think the first time I cooked dinner for my family, I was probably 10 or 11 years old,” Kevin recalls. “It has always been a part of my life.” His love for the precision and methodical nature of baking grew in high school, though he never imagined it would turn into a career.

For years, baking stayed a cherished hobby. Even while he worked in marketing and media in New York City, Kevin found time to bake for dinner parties and office gatherings. A serendipitous shift into food media reignited his passion for baking. During this time, he worked with *Bake from Scratch*, developing content partnerships with many of the brands that continue to collaborate with the publication today. This also led to him contributing the cover recipe to the May/June 2017 issue, a moment that foreshadowed his future in the baking world.



From a home kitchen to a thriving bakery, Kevin Masse’s Small State Provisions in Hartford, Connecticut, embodies what it means to bake with heart



In 2019, Kevin's journey took a pivotal turn. After relocating from New York City to the Hartford, Connecticut, area with his husband, Michael, a professor at Trinity College, Kevin secured one of West Hartford's first cottage food licenses—just as it became legal for home bakers to sell directly to consumers. About the same time, he was gifted a sourdough starter by his friend cookbook author Terry Walters. This starter—and the sourdough techniques she shared with him—became the foundation of Small State Provisions.

"I started making a couple of loaves a week," Kevin says. "I was baking in Dutch ovens at home, selling on a subscription model." Customers signed up for eight-week sessions, during which Kevin delivered fresh loaves straight to their doors. It was a small, sustainable operation—until everything changed in March 2020.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, contactless delivery became a necessity, and Kevin adapted quickly, baking and dropping off loaves at customers' homes. "I had this moment where I thought, 'I can either stop doing this or lean in and make it work,'" he says. He chose the latter, and before long, Small State Provisions outgrew his home kitchen. He converted part of his house into a bakery, setting up a shaping table, a bread oven, and a 40-quart spiral mixer.



By the end of 2020, it was clear this was no longer just a side project. With several full-time employees relying on him, Kevin made the leap to full-time bakery owner. The bakery's first retail location, a cozy 200-square-foot space, opened in July 2021. It quickly became apparent they needed more room. In July 2023, Small State Provisions moved into a larger space, expanding into a full café experience and increased production.

Behind this success is a true family effort. His husband helped get the bakery off the ground, while his dad is Chief Technology Officer, his stepmom is Chief Financial Officer, and his stepdad is his accountant. "It really does take a village to open a bakery and grow it," Kevin says. "And I'm so grateful for mine."

But Small State Provisions isn't just about making great bread and pastries—it's about creating a space where customers feel seen and valued. "We greet every customer as if they were family," Kevin says. "We get to know them, their kids' names, their orders. It's not just a transaction; it's about connection."

That sense of hospitality extends to his team as well. Kevin created a set of core values—his own version of the Ten Commandments—to ensure his employees feel supported. "Family comes first, second, and third," he explains. "I want my team to know that their personal lives matter, that we respect their time and commitments outside of work."

From the start, Small State Provisions has focused on high-quality, organic ingredients. "When you're only working with flour, salt, and water, you have to pay attention to the details," Kevin says. His team sources organic grains whenever possible, including locally milled rye flour from a small producer in Hadley, Massachusetts. "We try to work with small, local providers first before turning to national ones," he says. "It's about supporting our community."

Kevin's commitment to quality extends to his other baked goods, too. The bakery started with just two types of cookies and one scone, but today, the pastry case overflows with butter croissants, chocolate croissants, almond croissants, banana bread, and more. If you visit the bakery, three must-try items are his chewy gingerbread cookies, signature sourdough, and never-too-sweet blueberry scones.

Now, Small State Provisions has two locations and employs more than 30 people, a mix of full- and part-time staff. Some of them are high school students getting their first taste of the working world—something Kevin loves to support, inspired by his own teenage job at regional supermarket Wegmans. "I love that we can offer a space where young people can learn the art of hospitality," he says. "They're part of something bigger here."

While Kevin still spends time in the production kitchen, his role has evolved. A leadership course with the Bread Bakers Guild of America introduced him to the concept of working from "the balcony"—stepping back to oversee operations rather than being hands-on in production. "It's a transition I'm working through," he admits. "But I love leading the team and making sure they feel supported."

Through all the growth and success, Kevin's love for baking remains unchanged. "It's still magical to me," he says. "Taking something raw, putting it in the oven, and pulling out something completely transformed—it never gets old."

His personal favorites? The bakery's sourdough baguettes, which remind him of his travels to Paris. He also loves the focaccia, baked in a square pan with extra-virgin olive oil, rosemary, and sea salt. "That one's really special," he says. "It's simple but perfect."

Connecticut, the third-smallest state in the country, inspired the name Small State Provisions. While the name reflects the state's size, the bakery itself represents something much bigger: a business that has grown from a small cottage operation into a cornerstone of its community, built on the values of quality, connection, and care—one thoughtfully crafted loaf at a time.





BLUEBERRY-OAT SCONES

Makes 12 scones

Recipe by Kevin Masse, Small State Provisions

These hearty scones are the perfect combination of tender, flaky texture and bold, juicy blueberries. This recipe comes from Kevin Masse at Small State Provisions, who emphasizes strength over gentleness when it comes to mixing the dough—don't be afraid to get your hands in there! It's meant to be a little rugged, with some dry, crumbly spots, which are perfectly fine and add to the scones' charm. Just be sure not to overwork the dough or the blueberries might burst, leaving you with a soggy mess. The result? Golden, crisp-edged scones with a soft interior, speckled with bursts of blueberry goodness.

3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups (458 grams) whole wheat flour
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups (113 grams) oat flour
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup (133 grams) granulated sugar
2 teaspoons (10 grams) baking powder
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons (8 grams) baking soda
 $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt
1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups (284 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups (250 grams) frozen organic blueberries
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (150 grams) thick-cut old-fashioned oats
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (180 grams) whole buttermilk, plus more for brushing
2 large eggs (100 grams)
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
Turbinado sugar, for sprinkling

1. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In the work bowl of a food processor, process flours, granulated sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt until fine. Add cold butter, and process until butter is very fine but still visible.
3. Transfer flour mixture to a large bowl, and add blueberries and oats, tossing until combined.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together buttermilk, eggs, and vanilla. Pour over flour mixture, and work with your hands until a dough is formed. Divide dough into 12 portions (120 to 125 grams each), and press each into a tight ball. (A large spring-loaded scoop works well.) Place, evenly spaced, on prepared pan.
5. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).
6. Brush buttermilk onto dough, and sprinkle with turbinado sugar.
7. Bake until golden brown, 20 to 23 minutes. Let cool on pan for 5 minutes; serve warm. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 days. **D**

PRO TIP: Unbaked scones can be frozen in a heavy-duty resealable plastic bag for up to 1 month. Bake them from frozen, adding 5 to 10 minutes to the bake time.



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