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# Disc Jockey in the Kitchen

BY STEVEN SCHUSSLER

**BRIAN TURNER, KNOWN TO RADIO LISTENERS AS “B.T.,”** is best known as the morning voice of the popular radio station Cities 97, and has been on-air for the past 30 years entertaining and educating listeners. Recently B.T. and his family launched gourmet food line Elle-Tee & The Kitchen, which is being sold at Kowalski’s Markets and other high-end retailers.

**SS:** How did you get into broadcasting? **A:** I’ve always loved storytelling and the magic of radio. My dad was a huge fan of radio and he loved to tell jokes and stories. When I was 12 or 13 I decided I wanted to be on the radio. The announcers I looked up to in the industry were also active members of the community and that also had a big impact on me. I am celebrating my 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary [at Cities 97] this year, but I was also on the original team that launched the station in 1984.

**SS:** Most people don’t know that you own a gourmet food business and have aspirations of opening a restaurant. **A:** We have a family business by the name of Elle-Tee & The Kitchen, which creates handcrafted gourmet foods that are sold to high-end grocers, retailers and caterers, in addition to online through our website (elle-tee.com). We are continually expanding our product line and currently our main focus is on gourmet cheese dishes and baked goods. For example, Kowalski’s is a client of ours and they sell our macaroons under their name.

**SS:** How did you get into the food business? **A:** My wonderful wife of 21 years, Lori, is really the heart and soul of the business. In fact, the business is named after her, as “Elle-Tee” is her name spelled out phonetically. Lori has always been a foodie and she went back to school to learn more about food. After she earned a fine-pastry certificate, from there we decided to do something together in the industry. We built a small kitchen in Crystal even before we had a complete idea of what types of foods we would produce. Ultimately we were inspired to produce a line of cheese tortas in addition to baked goods and pastries.


**SS:** You mentioned this is a family business. Who else is involved? **A:** We have two children, Lydia (21) and Jackson (18). It is really rewarding to be able to spend time with our kids, building the business, and we are all doing what we love. Lori is the artisan and she heads up the creation of our product lines, as does



Lydia. We all work side by side. I run the back room, making sure the bills are paid and the equipment is running, but I also get my hands into the production line! Both Lori and I do sales.

**SS:** Have you experienced business failures or challenges in the past? **A:** Many times! In the early 1990s I had the pleasure of working with a friend with whom I started a radio group. Not too far along with the project and I was in over my head in many ways, and was filled with just enough ego to not inquire about my own shortcomings. I didn’t have the business skills the job required—and I also didn’t ask for the support that I needed. That experience and those lessons have carried forward with me, and today I constantly ask questions about things that I don’t know. The perspective of others in helping me to learn and fill voids is fundamental. Finding mentors and people who will be honest with you is invaluable. The most important thing you can do is get input from others that you respect.

**SS:** What words of advice and inspiration do you have for entrepreneurs, business professionals and students? **A:** Wake up every morning looking forward to the day. Don’t pursue something just for the money, because money really has no value and fame is, as the old saying goes, fleeting. Do what inspires you and wake up each day knowing that you are happy pursuing what you want to do. I don’t go to work in the morning. I get up and do what I love. And I do that all day long. I can’t imagine retiring.

**SS:** Share something about yourself that would surprise people and that you have not shared before. **A:** Better than 50 percent of my music listening is classical or opera. I’ve been in the rock and roll business for a long time and I love that music as well. But when I have classical or opera music playing, I don’t just have it on. I really try to listen. 

« Steven Schussler (steven@schusslercreative.com) is the founder, chairman and CEO of Schussler Creative, Inc., which specializes in creating, designing and developing theatrical attractions, restaurants, retail stores and entertainment venues worldwide. He is also the author of, *It’s a Jungle in There – Inspiring Lessons, Hard-Won Insights, and Other Acts of Entrepreneurial Daring*.