

The News Star

Monroe woman working to launch business empire

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For Yolanda Avery, making a movie based off her script is a literal dream come true, but she had no intention of stopping there. She's launching a food line that ties in with the movie, already is selling a cookbook and is working on children's books and a reality TV option.

Yolanda came up with the plot for "The Baking Club Chronicles: Nana's Bammy Sweets" over the course of a few weeks in her dreams in early 2014.



Six middle-aged women lose their retirement money when a Ponzi schemer targets their church. When one of the women is diagnosed with cancer, they open a bakery to start over and add marijuana for "extra fiber" to boost business. That doesn't sit well with a local drug dealer.

She wrote it all down as a script, her first. Later, she hired a ghostwriter to put it in the right format. She said it was a good investment because at the end, she had a well-polished manuscript.

People think you can do it without money, but each movie pitch cost \$20 here and there. She said it was an investment in herself that was needed.

Yolanda put the script on a movie pitch site about two years ago. The she waited, and waited.

She'd decided to pull it down and try another route. That day, she said, she got an email from Mehul Shah with Kinetik Films in from Austin, Texas, asking about her script.

Within eight hours, she had an offer. On Jan. 5, 2017, the ball started rolling and hasn't stopped.

"I think what drew me to the script was the unique and fun premise. It's not everyday we get to see the lives of women past the age of 40 navigating through life and it's obstacles and it was refreshing to see an older, all female ensemble cast. The film passes the Bechdel test as well, and it made me laugh and tear up and go through an emotional roller coaster with these ladies. The importance of friendship is the main theme of the film, which I responded to," Shah said.

Yolanda opted to be a part of the film, not just sell it, because she built a product brand that ties in with the movie.

"I told him this was my baby, so I wanted to be a part of the making," Yolanda said.

Some tweaks were made. The name of the movie is "Nana's Secret Recipe," and it features five women instead of six.



"Nana's Secret Recipe" was written by Yolanda Avery

"Nana's Secret Recipe" was written by Yolanda Avery of Monroe and filmed in Texas in November and December. (Photo: Property of Kinetik Films LLC)

Core issues she wanted to address with the film, like the potential benefits of medical marijuana, are unchanged.

"I want people to know that this movie is there to make you laugh, smile, and cry, but it also touches on a lot of important subjects of the aging population, moving on from heartbreak, tolerance and acceptance for everyone. I think the key in my films is to entertain but also discuss important issues dealing with individuals that audiences can identify with," Shah said.

Yolanda also wanted a movie with viable roles for middle-aged and elderly women.

"There are five ladies, and each one of them are going through their personal issues at the same time as they're all dealing with the bakery," Yolanda said.

Yolanda reviewed casting videos online. Production started in November and ended in mid-December. The film is in post-production with an estimated June release date.

In the film, the goodies they sell are called Bammy Sweets. That's where Dewmar International comes in.

Marco Moran, CEO of Dewmar, has launched food and beverage products like Lean Slow Motion Potion and Rocky Mountain High and Kush Cakes hemp-infused relaxation brownies. The formula is legal in all 50 states.

Moran helps promote businesses in northeastern Louisiana, and he's partnered with Yolanda to meet her goals.



The plan, Yolanda said, is to have Bammy Sweets brownies available by the time the movie launches.

In comments provided to The News-Star from Moran, Dewmar thinks the Bammy Sweets project could "be one of the top-selling product brands in Walmart in 2018 to marvel that of the Patti LaBelle sweet potato pies a few years ago."



Charlotte White appears as Suzanne in "Nana's Secret

Charlotte White appears as Suzanne in "Nana's Secret Recipe," and indie film written by Yolanda Avery of Monroe, Louisiana. (Photo: Property of Kinetik Films LLC)

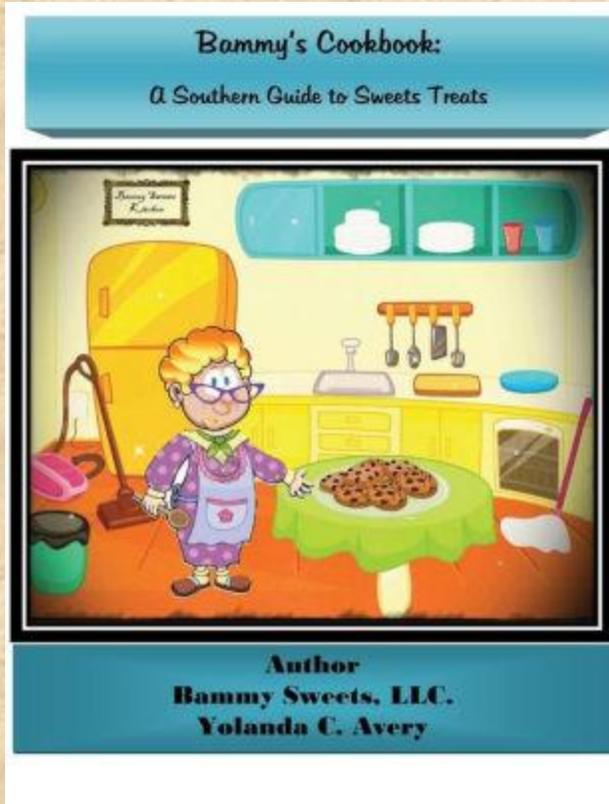
"So I know the business aspect of it because I've done it for other companies, and now I just want to do it for myself," she said.

Yolanda has a background as a purchasing manager and customer service manager. She the mother of five children — all of whom who have left the nest. She wasn't able to finish her degree until the kids were grown, and today she has a bachelor's in business management and is working on master's in health administration.

"You have to invest in yourself, whether it's education or something you feel passionate about," Yolanda said.

Yolanda's husband, Christopher, said she gets a lot done by always working on new projects. She always has a lot of options in motion.

"It comes from not sitting around," he said.



Yolanda already has a cookbook for sale at Barnes & Noble — "Bammy's Cookbook: A Southern Guide to Sweets Treats."

She said she developed the recipes with her college-aged daughter in mind.

"They don't like the big, long recipes like we do, but you want to have that same type of cookie and cake. You may find a small recipe that only included three or four items. You can do that, and that was my mission for cooking like this, to look at the people who don't do a lot of cooking because ... a woman don't want to stay in the kitchen all day cooking. You want something quick that you can whip up," Yolanda said.

She might make another cookbook for meals.

Yolanda's working on a rhyme-based line of Granny Fanny kids books and is looking for an illustrator. She wants to be sure the pictures pop out.

"Teaching kids valuable lessons, about life and what's good," Christopher said.

He speaks with obvious pride in his wife's accomplishments when he talks about her perseverance.

"You've just got to stay with it. If that's something you want, you have to do something every day. You have to believe; you can't just believe, you have to do something every day," Christopher said.

"I never thought that I would be on the road for the entertainment industry. ... You know, you sit back as a little girl and you wish and dream and you never thought it would be for yourself, but you have to invest in yourself — make your own way," she said.

Want more?

Follow the movie on IMDB: <http://imdb.to/2EQBjz3>

Get the cookbook: <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/bammys-cookbook-yolanda-avery/1127125916?ean=9781538076125>