



PannaDolce.com Bakes Up Sweet Macarons and Sales with Volusion ECommerce Software

Social networking tools enable e-tailer of French pastries to increase sales by 200% week after week

Panna Dolce (www.pannadolce.com) recently launched an online bakery serving French macarons with Volusion's award-winning ecommerce platform. The online bakery racked up \$2,000 in sales within the first two weeks of launching and since then orders have doubled week after week thanks to the built-in social networking tools on the Volusion platform, which allow shoppers to instantly share products among hundreds of social networks and news sources.

Sweet Results

- Panna Dolce actively engages users by sharing news on its blog, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, Google Maps, Yelp and Vimeo to build a loyal following. The bakery estimates 35% of its orders are from these sites.
- The online bakery surpassed sales projections for Valentine's Day and estimates 50% of the bakery's orders are from social networking sites.
- The online bakery has expanded into specialty grocery stores that include Chicago's The Goddess and Grocer.

The Perfect Recipe

After several trips to Paris in 2003, Katharine Greis and her husband Justin became infatuated with French macarons, which are delicate, chewy little pastry sandwiches filled with sweet cream and fresh preserves. Always having a sweet tooth, Katharine was looking to indulge her passion for sweets when she came up with the idea of starting an online bakery.



Katherine & Lauren Greis
Panna Dolce

Fast Facts

- Almond macarons, originally an Italian delicacy, were first created in 1792. Later, they were brought to France by Carmelite Nuns who were seeking asylum during the French Revolution.
- Unlike American macarons, also known as coconut drop cookies, a French or Italian macaron is not made with coconut. European macarons are made from almonds, eggs and sugar.
- Panna Dolce works with customers to create perfect macaron selections that are made up of custom flavor combinations.

The couple researched and taste-tested many samples at bakeries and restaurants from New York to Los Angeles looking for authentic tastes, but none matched the Parisian's texture, flavor and distinctive look. "Back in 2003, very few bakeries made them well in the U.S. and even fewer were able to ship across the country," said Justin Greis, co-owner of Panna Dolce. "We searched for the perfect recipe and balance of texture and taste but came up disappointed. We knew what we had to do next; make it ourselves!"

The couple spent five years researching and testing recipes that were true to the Parisian taste and durable enough to ship across the U.S. without breaking. Finally the couple invented a special recipe needed to create the authentic experience at home. Lauren Robin joined the partnership and added restaurant and hospitality experience to round out the team. Once they had their recipe and business model perfected, building a solid ecommerce site was the next step.

The Right Platform

With Justin working as a technology consultant and Katharine and Lauren as event planners by day, the team wanted to focus most of their free time on broadening their customer base and distribution channels. They needed a platform that required little time for coding and maintenance.

As a former owner of a web consulting company, Justin worked with several ecommerce platform providers, but found them all to be cumbersome and inadequate. He found he spent most of his time on maintenance and patching rather than running the business.

Since sales of macarons were largely going to be for gifts, it was important the platform also have built-in capabilities that allowed shoppers to easily create gift baskets, custom/flexible orders, and wish lists as well as buy gift certificates.

They also knew a real key to their business would be building a cult following, so social networking was a key to spreading the word about the little goodies. After extensive research, Panna Dolce chose Volusion due to its comprehensive functionality. The couple spent about three months customizing the site, creating the blog and social media pages and launched right before Christmas.

Our Site



Panna Dolce launched their online bakery in 2009, bringing in \$2,000 in sales within the first two weeks. Since then, orders have doubled week after week.

Panna Dolce has a very unique position in the marketplace - they're one of the only bakeries in the U.S. to have perfected the taste of the very delicate French macaron while ensuring durability for shipping. Co-owners Katharine Greis and her husband Justin became infatuated with these treats after several trips to Paris in 2003. The idea to open their online store was born.

Upon finalizing their macaron recipe, they decided to build a solid ecommerce site. Justin, a former owner of a web consulting company, quickly realized their online business needed a platform that required little time for coding and maintenance. After spending time with several inadequate and cumbersome ecommerce providers, Panna Dolce stumbled upon Volusion. The entrepreneurs were especially pleased that the platform allows customers to easily create gift baskets, enter custom/flexible orders, write wish lists and buy gift certificates.

Volusion offered the following features and benefits that were critical to the success of the project:

- **Social Store Builder and AddThis** – Enables Panna Dolce to sell pastries on MySpace and Facebook with product sharing capability across hundreds of social media networks and news sources.
- **Integrated SEO** – Site is easily search engine optimized resulting in top-ranked Google pages for target key words without third party SEO programs, giving the business immediate credibility.
- **Product Zoom** – Enhanced merchandizing feature allows PannaDolce customers to instantly magnify product details.
- **Integrated CRM** – With an advanced ticketing system and all-in-one admin area, Panna Dolce can manage the entire order process and customer experience from a single area of the store.
- **Unlimited Scalability** – The easily-scalable architecture with advanced load balancing & dynamic resourcing helped Panna Dolce meet its demanding spikes in traffic garnered from national media coverage.
- **Mission Critical Hosting** – With 100% redundancy, virtualized hardware-independent systems, and continuous data backups with data clustering, Volusion offered Panna Dolce the same technology infrastructure that powers systems for financial institutions.
- **Stringent Security** – Data is secured against theft or manipulation with integrated IP blocking, 24x7 surveillance and advanced encryption. PCI/CISP certification also ensures maximum protection of card-holder data. Volusion provides Panna Dolce with a guarantee that their customers' credit card information is securely collected, protected and stored.
- **Customer Service** – 24x7 customer service allowed Katherine to call for help at any time of day.
- **Email System and Newsletter Features** – Built-in email system allows Panna Dolce to easily build newsletters and communicate with customers in one central location

“I never thought social networking tools would generate such a tangible dollar-value return. To our surprise, we have more fans and followers than many well-established restaurants and bakeries; this has generated significant returns and driven qualified leads to our site. We are so grateful to our fans and followers...thank you!”

“People kept on saying ‘we have heard and read all about you guys and can’t wait to try your product. We are honored and lucky to have such amazing network of fans and friends.’”

“We’re seeing instant success thanks to Volusion’s comprehensive platform.”

Katherine & Lauren Greis
Panna Dolce

