

# Aleeza Bakery: The Rise of a Homegrown Dream

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## Prologue

On her 17th birthday, a teenage girl sat quietly, gazing at the cake before her. Yet instead of joy, a swirl of emotions filled her heart.

“How long will my family keep buying birthday cakes from other shops every year?” she wondered.

That seemingly simple question ignited a powerful spark within her; a deep desire to take control of her own future. She decided she wanted to learn how to bake; not just for herself, but for her family and community. Driven by this newfound passion, she enrolled in a diploma programme in baking and pastry. Months turned into years, and her skills flourished; but so, did her vision.

One day, she recalled a local saying:

“Even though there were no dark clouds, suddenly it rained.”

It perfectly described the moment her mindset shifted completely. No longer content with just baking for her loved ones, she declared: “With the knowledge and skills I have, I want to open a bakery shop and create job opportunities for the people in Jeli.”

Her dream was more than just building business; it was rooted in hope and empowerment. She envisioned a bakery that could show the local community that even in a remote area far from the city, people could earn a sustainable living; with fair wages, bonuses, annual leave, and SOCSO coverage. That

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## KEYWORDS

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## Disclaimer

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teenage girl is now known as Mrs. Azliza, the proud owner and entrepreneur behind Aleeza Bakery in Jeli town. But the journey was not without risks.

“Hiring workers without certificates and with no skills at all in baking is the biggest risk I have ever taken,” said Mrs. Azliza.

To grow her bakery while staying true to her mission of community support, she chose to hire local individuals with no formal qualifications; a bold move that few entrepreneurs dare to make. This decision reflects the core challenge she continues to face; balancing business growth with social impact while navigating the uncertainties of entrepreneurship. Her story is one of courage, vision, and the transformative power of pursuing a dream sparked by a single birthday cake.

### **Profile of an Entrepreneur**

In the quiet town of Jeli, Kelantan, where the East-West Highway winds between lush forests and hills, a modest shop beside a petrol station became the starting point of an inspiring entrepreneurial journey. Noor Azliza binti Ab Aziz, a 37-year-old wife and mother of four, began her business with little more than a diploma in Baking and Pastry Production and a strong determination to build something of her own.

After graduating in 2012, she did not wait for opportunities to come knocking; she created them. From her home kitchen, she started selling simple breakfast favourites: donuts, fried buns, and sausages ; all homemade with care and sold with sincerity.

Her early customers were neighbours and friends, but word quickly spread. In 2013, just a year after launching her home-based venture, Azliza opened her first small shop, strategically located next to the BHP petrol station along the highway. Both travelers and locals began stopping by for her fresh, affordable treats.

What made her business stand out was not just the taste of her products but also her warm and personal engagement with customers. She listened attentively, welcomed feedback with humility, and constantly improved her offerings. She also managed her operations with prudence, especially

when it came to sourcing raw materials; a skill that proved essential in keeping costs low and profits margins sustainable.

As the years passed, Azliza's determination never waned. Despite the challenges of managing a growing business and a young family, she kept pushing forward. In 2020, she took a major step forward her The new locations brought greater visibility, a larger. The location brought visibility, greater visibility, and new opportunities. Today, her business continues to flourish, serving as both a local favourite and a symbol of what passion, resilience, and community connection can achieve.

### **Company History**

The story of Aleeza Bakery is one marked by resilience, sacrifice, and unwavering ambition; a journey interwoven with both sweet successes and formidable challenges. Located in the heart of Jeli town, the bakery's modest signboard stands as a testament to Mrs. Noor Azliza's indomitable spirit and entrepreneurial drive. Guided by her personal motto, "Just do it, never say NO," she navigated each obstacle with courage and tenacity.

From the very beginning, Mrs. Noor Azliza made deliberate sacrifices, temporarily setting aside her entrepreneurial aspirations to pursue higher education. Recognizing the value of foundational knowledge, she committed herself to acquiring both theoretical insights and practical skills in production and business management. This period of focused learning laid the groundwork for her future enterprise, equipping her with the tools necessary to realize her long-term vision.

Her breakthrough came during the fourth semester of her final year. Drawing upon two years of academic study and industrial training, she seized the opportunity in 2012 to launch a modest business from her parents' kitchen. With only RM3,800 in savings and a bit of family support, she invested in a mixer and an oven to facilitate small-scale production. While her peers woke at 6:00 a.m. for college, she was already in the kitchen by 3:30 a.m., preparing breakfast items; including donuts, fried buns, sausages, and traditional pastries; with her parents' help. By 6:30 a.m., she would deliver orders to local eateries before returning to college for her 7:30 a.m. classes. For six months, this demanding routine was her reality, driven by the need to fund her education without burdening her family.

This formative experience cultivated her entrepreneurial mindset; characterized by a continual pursuit of self-improvement, innovation, and service to her family and community. After obtaining her diploma in 2012, she expanded her product range to include cookies and cakes, catering to a growing base of relatives, friends, and neighbors. She welcomed feedback, firmly believing that *“constructive criticism and advice are essential for a product to truly align with customer needs.”*

In 2013, just a year later, Mrs. Noor Azliza took a significant step forward by opening her first physical shop along the East-West Highway, strategically located beside the BHP petrol station. This expansion was a calculated risk, made possible by the support of her growing team; five dedicated staff members who became the cornerstone of her bakery’s daily operations.

Through perseverance, adaptability, and a deep commitment to continuous learning, Mrs. Noor Azliza successfully transformed a modest home-based initiative into a flourishing bakery. More than just a business, Aleeza Bakery has become a source of inspiration within the community, embodying the spirit of determination and grassroots entrepreneurship.



Figure 1: The Aleeza Bakery Branding

### **Step by Step, Through the Storm**

*“Where there is day, there is night. Where there is white, there is black. Where there is success, there are also challenges.”*

While dreams may be free and boundless, the reality of entrepreneurship is often laden with unforeseen challenges. For Mrs. Noor Azliza, founder of Aleeza Bakery, the journey to success was marked by persistence, resilience, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

One of the most significant challenges she faced was the prolonged process of formally establishing her brand. It took nearly five years to register her business name with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM). Through participation in entrepreneurial workshops and engagement with seasoned business owners, she came to understand the critical distinction between registering a business entity and registering a brand name. Eventually, she succeeded in registering her company as AZ Bakery, derived from her own name, while the brand “Aleeza Bakery” was chosen in tribute to her daughter, Aleeza.

As the business expanded, so too did the number of staff and product output. However, Mrs. Noor Azliza observed that a majority of orders originated from areas outside the immediate locality. This logistical mismatch resulted in inefficiencies and significant raw material wastage. Acknowledging the need for a more strategic operating base, and with encouragement from both customers and her team, she made the pivotal decision to relocate.

In 2020, Aleeza Bakery transitioned to a two-storey facility in Jeli town. The move included not only the full transfer of equipment and personnel but also provisions for staff accommodation through rental housing. This relocation marked a critical step in positioning Aleeza Bakery for broader market reach across the state of Kelantan.

*“If you have money, you can start any business but to sustain that business is very difficult and*

The true measure of entrepreneurship, as Mrs. Noor Azliza discovered, lies not in launching a business but in sustaining it through adversity. One of her most pressing challenges involved staffing. Many of the individuals she employed lacked basic knowledge of food production; some were unable to differentiate between fundamental baking ingredients and equipment. Despite this, she committed herself to training them, investing both time and resources into their development. This investment, however, was met with disappointment when four out of five employees resigned without prior notice. The sudden loss left her disheartened, having poured considerable effort into nurturing their capabilities.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic brought additional, unforeseen trials. Government-imposed restrictions on food service operations and social distancing measures severely disrupted her bakery's income stream. Nonetheless, Mrs. Noor Azliza exemplified adaptability and resilience. Recognizing a shift in consumer behavior as people stayed home seeking comfort food, she restructured her business model to offer pizzas and donuts through a cash-on-delivery (COD) system. This pivot allowed her to maintain a modest but vital revenue flow, covering core operational expenses such as rent, utilities, and household needs.

### **Navigating the Tech Shift**

Aleeza Bakery has built its brand around an array of irresistible desserts and confections that resonate with customers across generations. From the early days of operation, its product lineup has featured timeless favorites such as flavored donuts, brownies, birthday cakes, and mini moist cakes. Among these, the Hokkaido cake has emerged as the bakery's hallmark product, renowned for its distinctive texture and remarkable shelf life; lasting up to six months when stored in a freezer. This cake has sustained its status as a best-seller for nearly seven years, playing a pivotal role in the bakery's enduring popularity.

What sets Aleeza Bakery apart is its strategic approach to product-market alignment. Offerings are thoughtfully customized to suit various customer segments. For instance, the introduction of small-sized, budget-friendly cakes specifically targets young children celebrating birthdays; an initiative designed to tap into a market with promising intergenerational continuity. As Mrs. Noor Azliza insightfully reflects:

*"The cake bought by a mother for her child today will be bought by that child for their own child tomorrow. This tradition of love will continue to live on with a taste that never changes."*



Figure 2: Children's cake deco

In response to shifting consumer behaviors and the accelerating rise of digital technology, Aleeza Bakery has embraced a range of innovations aimed at enhancing both customer experience and operational efficiency. A significant advancement has been the integration of QR code payment systems, which streamline the purchasing process and align with Malaysia's growing trend toward cashless transactions. This modernization effort has made the payment experience more seamless and convenient for customers, especially among younger demographics.

In addition to upgrading its payment infrastructure, Mrs. Noor Azliza has effectively leveraged digital marketing tools to broaden the bakery's market reach. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Telegram, and Facebook have become central to her promotional strategy. Through consistent, creative, and relatable content, Aleeza Bakery has successfully captured the attention of a wider audience across Kelantan and neighboring regions. Notably, the bakery's official Instagram account, active since 2013, serves as a dynamic portfolio; featuring product showcases, customer celebrations, and seasonal promotions that reinforce brand identity, enhance visibility, and foster long-term customer engagement.

### **Unveiling the Secret to Success**

Behind every successful entrepreneur lies a source of strength, motivation, and steadfast support. For Mrs. Noor Azliza, the founder of Aleeza Bakery, her entrepreneurial journey has been deeply enriched not only by personal determination but also by the enduring encouragement of her ten loyal staff members. Their collective dedication and shared vision of expanding the bakery's presence across the district have been cultivated through her mentorship, patience, and consistent leadership since the inception of their collaboration.

These ten individuals have become more than just employees; they represent a pillar of inspiration and emotional fortitude for Mrs. Azliza. Their unwavering support has enabled her to confront challenges without hesitation, emboldened by the assurance that she is never alone in her efforts. A defining moment in her entrepreneurial path was her unexpected success in the Rural Business Challenge (RBC 2.0), a prestigious competition that drew over a thousand local business owners. Her company emerged among the top 50 winners; a testament not only to her dedication but also to the synergistic strength of her team.

Initially uncertain of her own potential, Mrs. Azliza attributes much of her resilience and achievements to the camaraderie and belief her team instilled in her. Reflecting on this milestone, she expressed:

*“It is not my own strength that keeps me standing, but ten hands behind me that never tire of supporting my falls.”*

This case highlights the essential role of team solidarity, mentorship, and mutual empowerment in fostering entrepreneurial success. Mrs. Noor Azliza’s journey powerfully illustrates that when individual ambition is bolstered by collective support, even the most formidable challenges can be transformed into meaningful accomplishments.



Figure 4: Mrs. Noor Azliza one of the winners



Figure 5: The Aleeza Bakery Staff

## Epilogue

As Mrs. Noor Azliza held a Hokkaido cake in her hands; now a signature product and emblem of her entrepreneurial journey; she paused for a moment of quiet contemplation. Gratitude welled in her heart, not only for the realization of her dream but for the path she had traversed; one far more remarkable than she had ever envisioned. Yet beneath the surface of this calm reflection lingered two unspoken but deeply personal questions:

*“Am I truly ready to face the unexpected challenges that the future holds?”*  
*“Will the team I have nurtured remain loyal and carry forward the legacy of Aleeza Bakery when I am no longer here?”*

These questions, though unvoiced, resonate beyond her own story. They call upon all entrepreneurs and changemakers to reflect on the essence of resilience and legacy. What trials lie ahead on our own journeys, and how equipped are we to navigate them? Who are the people we trust to share our vision; and how do we cultivate that trust across time?

With over thirteen years of entrepreneurial experience, a deep-seated commitment to her staff, and an adaptive mindset finely attuned to the evolving business landscape, Mrs. Noor Azliza remains resolute. Her vision extends beyond commercial success. It is rooted in empowerment; uplifting the Jeli community, providing meaningful employment, and nurturing a team that can one day carry the torch forward.

Step by step, hand in hand with her devoted team, Mrs. Noor Azliza continues to guide Aleeza Bakery toward new horizons. Her journey stands as a powerful testament to the impact of perseverance, vision, and collective strength.

As you close this case study, take a moment to ask yourself:

What challenges lie ahead in your own journey, and how prepared are you to confront them? Who are the people you trust to support your vision, and how will you nurture that trust for the future?