

Lovett Sundries

With all of their products made by hand, and in small batches, Lovett Sundries, at its core, embraces functionality, simplicity, and honesty. They keep these values in mind with every recipe they develop and each decision they make.

INTERVIEW BY DANIELLE WILLIAMS

Functioning as a family-run company since their inception in 2015, Lovett Sundries is the beautiful outcome of Jeff Lovett and Marit Aagaard's passion to run a small business devoted to using all-natural ingredients. Using only essential-oil-based fragrances, they are proud of developing scents that come straight from nature. All of their products ship plastic-free, and their no-nonsense mindset adds a refreshing layer to skin care. Read on to learn more about what makes their company tick.

WILLOW AND SAGE: Tell us about yourselves.

JEFF LOVETT: I'm a maker at heart. I have a wild background; at a young age I trained as a rescue diver and private pilot. I went to college for art ... twice! Then I ended up welding for Ringling Bros. Circus before moving to New York City and building sets for TV and Broadway. I'm a bit of a restless soul, always looking for ways to organize, improve, and tweak nearly everything in my life! I've never met a system I couldn't make more efficient.

MARIT AAGAARD: I'm an optimist who likes to jump into new projects feet first and figure out the details later. I grew up in small-town Texas and studied costume construction. I moved to New York City as soon as I could and worked on costumes for Broadway shows and Metropolitan Opera productions. That is where I met Jeff! We eventually moved to eastern Ohio to attend graduate school, where I realized how much I had missed seeing green grass and stars at night. That's where I started canning and brewing beer, which quickly led to making soap and hand cream. 🌿







W & S: How did you get interested in all-natural skin care?

MA: In 2012, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I've always been incredibly healthy, so it was a real shock to be faced with the reality of such a serious diagnosis. It's not that I think there is a direct connection between commercially manufactured personal-care products and cancer, but this wake-up call had me reading the ingredient labels that I'd never really paid attention to before. One unpronounceable ingredient after another left me feeling like there must be a better way.

W & S: How did you get started? And how did you get to where you are today?

JL: We started when our son, Finn, was born. I was in between jobs, and the high price of daycare for a newborn made it very enticing to stay home for that first year or two and raise our kid. It didn't take long for my restlessness to kick in, and I started researching what it would take to start a business selling some of the homemade products we'd been using for years. While researching, I realized most self-care products are heavily scented or really colorful, and it seemed like there was room for something a little simpler and more pure that had fragrance-free options. Over the last eight years, we have grown from our kitchen to a whole floor of our home, to an 800-square-foot workshop/storefront, to our current location: a big four-story storefront in a historic shopping district. Every time we expand, we add new tools and better systems. Eventually, we added some staff members, and we've got plans to keep growing.

W & S: What inspires you?

JL & MA: We're inspired by the massive network of small craft businesses around the country. In the face of Amazon and Walmart, there are folks out there living their dream and making it work. Whether it's a business of one or a staff of 20, running a small business takes great bravery and a ton of confidence. Seeing others hustle, succeed, and fail, all to create something out of nothing, is always inspiring.

W & S: What are your roles in the business?

JL: I do all of the supporting roles. In the beginning, I spent my time designing our branding and packaging, building out our website, and setting up all the logistics of the business. Now when I'm not taking care of our 130-year-old building, I spend my time designing systems to track our sourcing, production, inventory, and sales efforts — and sending emails ... always emails.

MA: I manage our staff, make products, order components, fulfill orders, and develop new products! I started in our kitchen at home with ingredients from our pantry and a book about sustainable homesteading. It was as fun then as it is now. I love sharing our creations with new people! 🌿







W & S: Describe your brand's style and aesthetic.

JL & MA: Our brand is simple, sustainable, and eco-friendly, with a nod to the vintage general stores of Appalachia. We use recyclable containers and minimal packaging. Our ingredients are listed right on the front of each product in plain language so our customers know exactly what they are putting on their skin without trying to read the tiny print on the back. We buy our natural ingredients from several distributors around the country and choose the most environmentally friendly options possible.

W & S: How did you come up with the name of your business? What is its significance?

JL: Lovett Sundries gets its name from my last name. People have always joked with me, asking, "Do you love it?" I hesitated to tie our business to my name that way, but when we were trying to come up with a name, Lovett kept coming back. Once we started to be able to articulate what we wanted our brand to be, we realized how important it is to us to make sure that our customer knows that we stand behind every product we sell. There's no better way to show that commitment than by "signing" every product with your name. As for the "Sundries" part, we have always been interested in how things can have multiple uses and multiple lives. We found inspiration in the way old general stores would stock everything from groceries to tools to soaps, and we wanted to build a brand that embodied that kind of no-nonsense, use-all-the-parts mindset. "Lovett Sundries" seemed to fit the bill.



W & S: Describe your workspace.

JL & MA: Our workspace is one big room with areas for production, labeling, shipping, and office work. It is organized and flexible, allowing us to be as efficient as possible and pivot between projects easily. We all have our primary jobs, but we can also jump in and help out in any area to keep things running smoothly. 🌿



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W & S: What sort of milestones have you hit as a company?

JL & MA: Many of our milestones have as much to do with where we are working as what we're working on. How we use, fill, and eventually grow out of our workspace has become an excellent way to visualize the growth of our company. It all started in our kitchen with a book about sustainable living. When we decided to transition this hobby into a business, we devoted the whole first floor of our house to production and fulfillment. After a couple of years, we moved into a tiny 800-square-foot building just down the street. It was small, but having a whole space dedicated to Lovett Sundries made everything much more efficient. That space was perfect for a couple of years. Then, all of a sudden, we realized that we needed room for pallets of containers and barrels of oil, so we started looking for a bigger location. Incredibly, we found a four-floor 9,000-square-foot building that was 130 years old just three blocks from our home and first tiny shop. Buying that property, prepping the workshop, and moving production while continuing to fill orders was one of the hardest things we've ever taken on. It was worth it, though! Now we have a fantastic workspace, plenty of storage, and a cute little storefront right on Main Street (actually, Penn Avenue). It's a neighborhood that we are proud of and invested in. We're looking forward to the next milestone, but we hope it doesn't mean moving again!

W & S: Are you working on any exciting new projects or collections?

JL & MA: As small-business owners and parents of small children, it's hard to find the time to take a bath. For years, a luxurious bath with soaking salts or fragrant bath bombs were the only options to have a relaxing or refreshing wash. Now, our essential-oil-scented shower steamers bring that luxury to the shower, and everybody has time for that.

Jeff Lovett and Marit Aagaard are the masterminds behind Lovett Sundries. To learn more, visit lovettsundries.com and follow along on Facebook ([lovettsundries](https://www.facebook.com/lovettsundries)) and Instagram ([@lovett_sundries](https://www.instagram.com/lovett_sundries)). You can sign up for their newsletter on their website, and they welcome email at info@lovettsundries.com.