



## *Meet the Grower* *Dutch Waffle Company*

In 1988 Dutch Waffle Company CEO Bianca Elisabeth Letens -Van der Gaag attended the North Wood High School in Nappanee, Indiana as a senior. From that time on, she stayed in close contact with both of her host families. Bianca introduced Dutch Syrup Waffles (in the Netherlands called “Stroopwafels”) to both families and got them hooked. Every visit after that, Bianca always had to bring the famous Dutch Syrup Waffles to both families.

Bianca met her husband Patrick in 1993 and took him over for the first time in 1995 to the United States of America to meet both host families. Bianca and Patrick both took 2 suitcases along. One filled with personal belongings and one with Dutch Syrup Waffles.

In 1998 Bianca and Patrick got married and both host families took the wonderful effort to come over for the wedding. In that time, Jim Hartman, advised Bianca and Patrick to start selling Dutch Syrup Waffles in the USA. Being a smart businessman, Bianca and Patrick took his advice and bought a waffle baking iron and got skilled at a famous Dutch Syrup Waffle factory.

In 1999 Bianca and Patrick did a 10-week market research to see if the USA was ready for the Dutch Syrup Waffles. They got in contact with a Canadian Dutch Syrup Waffle baker to get them started. In that 10-week period Bianca and Patrick met a lot of companies that wanted to work together with them to get the Dutch Syrup Waffle sold in the USA. The Dutch Waffle Company was born and registered in Elkhart Indiana in August 1999. A tough and time-consuming period started with lawyers to get all the documents and visas to move over to the USA. After a couple of years, the attempt was put on hold, due to the expenses and disappointments of getting things done. Almost reaching the age of 50, Bianca and Patrick put their still living dream of selling Dutch Syrup Waffles in the USA in a prayer and after that, all the necessary doors opened and got the process running again.

In July 2019 Bianca and Patrick got a “GO” from the US Consulate and they sold their house and were brought to the airport by their close friend Henk Venema. The Dutch Waffle Company was allowed to spread their wings in the USA and to follow their oldest daughter that is living as an alumna from Bethel University in Mishawaka Indiana.

