

Milton • Means Business

Cupcake craze hits town with Flour Girls



Susy Pardo shows some of the stylish creations of Flour Girls.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Caterers quickly carving out place in the market with specialty sweets

By GILLIAN CORMIER

Special to The Champion

Catering is a piece of cake for Miltonian Susy Pardo.

She and partner Maria Kardaris have recently launched Flour Girls, a virtual company they describe as an "old-fashioned bakery with a twist," which specializes in unique and customized cupcakes.

"It was something that had been on my mind for a number of years," said Ms Pardo.

Baking has been a life-long passion for her, but the desire to create her own line of baked goods was ignited after she attended a culinary program at the French Culinary Institute in New York. "There is a cupcake craze in New York right now," she said. "People can't seem to resist a cupcake — something about cupcakes makes people want to reach out and take one."

From this craze, Flour Girls was born.

Ms Pardo and Ms Kardaris met as co-workers at an advertising agency and decided to go into business together.

Ms Kardaris, who has a background in public relations, handles the business end of Flour Girls while Ms Pardo takes care of the baking. Flour Girls began this past February, catering to family and friends, and then officially launched in May.

As a virtual bakeshop, Flour Girls relies on the visuals on its Web site and word of mouth to promote its baked goods.

One of the benefits of being a virtual business is the customization Flour Girls offers its clients. Customers can choose to personalize their cupcakes with homemade chocolates, sugar flowers, butter cream flowers, and even fresh flowers for elegant gatherings. For kids' parties, they have sugar-art characters like Dora the Explorer, Barbie, and other favourites.

"It's a novelty thing," said Ms Pardo. "People love it."

Cupcakes also range from very traditional butter cream icing cupcakes to elaborate cupcake fare for formal events. Cupcake trees are the perfect solution to expensive

"We can help people with theme ideas. And we've done in-home meetings to help people decide exactly what they want so they'll keep coming back."

SUSY PARDO

wedding cakes, she said, and they make children's birthday parties much less stressful. "Someone doesn't have to be there cutting the cake," she said. "People can just serve themselves."

Flour Girls offers both standard and specialty cupcakes, but certainly doesn't stop there. It also offers a wide range of customized decorative cookies, popular for wedding and baby showers, and has even made cookies for company product launches.

"We can help people with theme ideas," she said. "And we've done in-home meetings to help people decide exactly what they want so they'll keep coming back."

Flour Girls, though based out of Milton and Markham, does a lot of business in Toronto, where news of its specialty treats is spreading fast.

"We're starting to get to the point where we can't figure out how people found out about us," she said. "We used to be able to trace it back through six degrees of separation and word of mouth."

The duo has big plans for the company, and are fuelled by a passion for quality service, creativity, and the desire to meet the sugar cravings of their customers.

"We're hoping to open up a shop eventually where we can accommodate walk-in traffic, she said. "But we still want to maintain that extra-special customer service."

For more information on Flour Girls, call (416) 219-0555 or visit www.flourgirls.com.

CORRECTION NOTICE

PLEASE NOTE:

The July Door Hanger The address should read 311 Martin St. Milton.

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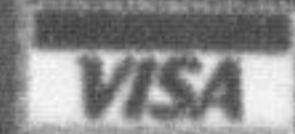
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