

BUSINESS

Aunty Ellen's 'takes the cake' for grown-ups tastes

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Ellen Fay, of Aunty Ellen's Creative Confections, has unlocked the secret of a truly delectable dessert-start with a gourmet cake and add a splash of fancy liqueur.

"I call them my boozy bundts," said Fay.

She took the huge leap that will hopefully jumpstart her business when she recently moved into the tiny building at 12A Lindell Ave. - right at the corner of Lindell and North Main Street (Route 12).

"We opened in mid-March," she says. "I've been doing cakes out of my house for years. I started doing wedding cakes in the late 1980s" when Christopher "Chrissy" Daigneault of the El Camino Restaurant family married to Atty. Kathleen Reynolds.

"They asked me to do their wedding cake... I put 17 hours into doing that one cake - a square base with three round tiers," she said.

Fay has taken cake decorating classes

that supplement her years of baking experience. Although she specializes in wedding cakes, a growing part of her baking business is dessert cakes and cookie trays, which she wholesales to area restaurants and food service facilities.

She admits that she's always experimenting.

"My carrot cake and my butter rum coffee cake are the most popular [results]," she said. Fay whips up combinations such as a yellow Grand Marnier cake with white chocolate truffle, and mint chocolate cake with Godiva liqueur and topped with chocolate ganache.

"Most of my cakes have booze in them [but it's] all good stuff," Fay notes.

"I can't compete with supermarkets for kids' birthday cakes with photos on them. I want to produce something special so people don't have to go to Boston."

She didn't start out with the idea of baking as a career.

"I used to work for Verizon... until 9/11, when we lost a lot of accounts. I also worked for my father, John Fay, who owns a plastics firm called Biomedical Polymers."

His business was originally in downtown Leominster and is now in Gardner.

Right now, Fay wants to grow her business, but not beyond what she can handle by herself. It's progressing in small increments, and subsequently hasn't required a business loan.

"I don't want to get all stressed out and fail," she insists.

For a marketing strategy, she reports, "I bring cakes and cookies everywhere I go, I know my name is getting out there slowly."

"I'm [only] taking orders right now," she says, since there's no space to display inventory for walk-in retail. "I only have 450 square feet in four rooms" in the little building, she notes, and needs

most of the rooms for baking equipment, ovens and pantry space.

"I produce a very elegant product. I make a rolled fondant [for cakes] since not many do it in this area," she said.

She explains that she buys fondant in bulk, white or tinted. It's a pliable candy product made from cooked sugar. It is rolled thin, cut and shaped into a covering for the finished cake. It's "glued" to the cake surface with regular frosting, and it provides a smooth, seamless-and firm — palette for extra fancy or creative decorating. "You learn little tricks along the way to make the cake look perfect," notes Fay.

"I do it all myself," she says. "Some weekends I've got six wedding cakes on order, I make them a day or two before the wedding or event."

She is currently providing cakes and desserts for functions at Wachusett Village Inn, Wachusett Mountain Ski Area and several local restaurants, as well as for individuals.

Right now the product line includes any kind of cake, cheesecakes, bundt cakes and coffee cakes, and a variety of cookies including dark or white chocolate chip, macaroons and peanut butter with the Hershey Kiss center.

Although Fay is in and out of the shop, she says, "I'm mostly here Tuesday through Saturday." The phone number, to place an order, is (978) 537-5675. She recommends leaving a message, "if my hands are in the sink...I can't get to the phone immediately [but] I'll call right back."



Ellen Fay with one of her creations.

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