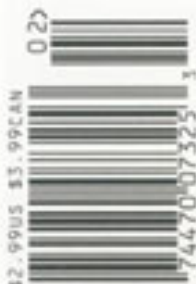


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Slices of Heaven

It's Edda the Cake Lady!

Words by Marla E. Schwartz

A passion is born

"When I was nine years old," says **Edda Martinez**, resident of Coral Gables and owner of **Edda's Cake Designs**, "my parents told all my siblings that we would each have a \$15 budget for our Christmas gift. I chose to spend my \$15 on an electric hand-held mixer." And so a baker was born.

From such humble beginnings the business Edda founded almost thirty years ago has since flourished into an institution in South Florida, boasting four locations throughout the region. The first store opened in South Miami in 1992; the second in Doral in 1998, the third in Coral Gables in 2000, and the fourth store opened its doors in Pembroke Pines in October, 2006. For Edda, though, her business is still a dream come true.

"Cooking is my life's passion," the demure, attractive woman says. "It began in Cuba when I was a child. Later my family moved to the US. But ever since I can remember I would help my aunt bake cakes. As time passed I combined that passion with my love of art and design, which I inherited from my mother."



"In 1976 I began taking both baking and decorating classes. Soon after I answered an ad in the paper that read: 'Cake Decorators Wanted,' which ended up being for Wilton Enterprises. In 1982, the

workload between Wilton and the cakes I was doing on the side became too much and the natural progression was for me to branch off and start my own company . . . and I did!"

And all of Southeast Florida is decidedly glad she took the plunge.

The Biz

With a motto that states: "Your wish is our creation," it's unlikely that Edda's will turn away a client. The savvy cake-makers are able to base cake designs on something as nebulous as an old photograph, a heartfelt drawing, or the detail from a bride's dress.

In addition to looking good, the list of cake flavors Edda's specializes in are enough to turn heads—and tastebuds. Perhaps best known for her vanilla-rum cake, Edda also offers, among other flavors, chocolate, marble, lemon, orange, amaretto, piña colada, and Colombian fruit cake.

All cakes are priced per portion, ranging in price from \$1.25 for a buttercream to a fondant

which begins at \$3.25 per portion. But when you make the wedding cakes for eight out of every ten Southern Florida bride, plus cakes for birthdays, anniversaries,



retirements, and so many more occasions, you can command a fair price for your artistic creations. And judging from the sales figures, no one is arguing with Edda's **Cake Designs**.

The business produces an average of 7,200 cakes each month between the four stores. (Seventy-five of them are wedding cakes, and that number increases in April and May, the busiest months for matrimonial concoctions.) That's 1,800 tasty cakes per week. Of these, about 85% are vanilla-rum, followed by chocolate, marble, and guava, with the more specialized flavors also pulling respectable numbers. And sales for the new vanilla-rum Bundt cake, introduced in November 2006, have boomed, resulting in 250-300 Bundts a week. Now that's a lot of cake.

Judging from the ranks of satisfied customers, Edda's designs are a big hit. In addition to private parties Edda's has amassed quite a list of satisfied and repeat corporate clients including **The Rusty Pelican**, **The Biltmore Hotel**, **Liga Contra el Cancer**, **The Colonnade**, and **Amigos for Kids**. (Corporate accounts, by the way, more often than not opt for the vanilla-rum flavored cake.)

And Edda's is scheduled soon to launch its **Birthdays Blessings** program. "We will

partner up with a different children's charity each month," says the doyenne of cakes, "to celebrate the children's birthdays with a party cake and all!"

And as for the rich and famous, Edda says let them eat cake . . . her cake! She's crafted cakes for all manner of celebrity, including **Gloria Estefan**, **Carlos Ponce**, **Dwayne Wade**, **Andy Garcia**, **Julio Iglesias**, **Deco Drive** anchors **Lyn Martinez** and **Louis Aguirre**, and **Jorge Perez**, among others.

Family Affair

For Edda, even more important than her love for baking is her love for her family. The business is flourishing, according to Edda, because it is a family affair. And because the very first cakes she baked were, as she said, ". . . birthday cakes for family members," it seems essential that she be surrounded by family while doing what she loves best.

Edda's husband, **Eduardo**, retired early and now helps with operations and administration of Edda's **Cake Designs**. And their three children all work for Edda. **Eddie** is the oldest, followed by **Carlos**, and then **Susy**, the baby of the family.

"I focus on training employees, designing cakes, and meeting with customers," Edda

explains. "However, I am still involved in all business aspects of the company." In addition to being the General Manager at the Doral, Coral Gables, and Pembroke Pines locations, Carlos is also charged with running the sales and marketing for all four stores.

Susy oversees production at three of the company's four locations, Doral, Coral Gables, and South Miami. Susy, Ana (Carlos' wife), and Edda all train employees at all four stores in cake decorating. The fact that everyone works together ". . . is extremely unexpected and I can't begin to describe how proud it makes me and how rewarding it is," says Edda.

Rewarding it well may be, but does Edda still have a taste for cake after all these years? We put the ultimate question to the **Cake Lady**: If stranded on a desert (or would that be dessert?) island, what's the one flavor of Edda's cake that Edda herself couldn't do without? "The vanilla-rum Bundt cake," she says quickly and with a smile.

Now that's passion!

If you have questions about Edda's toothsome treats, or for directions to all four of the **Edda's Cake Designs** locations, each open 8:30am to 6:30pm, Monday through Saturday, visit cakedesignsbyedda.com or call (305) 666-6999. **ML**