



By: Janet Miller

## New Ann Arbor cupcake shop Just Baked opens in February in Westgate

When **Pam and Todd Turkin** opened their first **Just Baked** cupcake shop and bakery in Livonia a short year ago, they didn't know they would be launching a cupcake kingdom.

Todd was out of work and Pam had an eye for design, a background in marketing and a love of cupcakes. While she held on to her day job marketing Caterpillar apparel, Pam along with her husband opened Just Baked in a former German bakery in Livonia.

Six weeks later, she left her job so both could focus on cupcakes. And exactly a year after they opened their first store, the couple was selling 7,000 cupcakes a week. "We never planned for this to happen," said Pam Turkin. "It has a mind of its own."

Now the couple is about to open their third store, this one at the **Westgate Shopping Center** in Ann Arbor. The westside Ann Arbor mall attracts the demographic they want - moms with children in tow, middle aged women, townies rather than students. Its position next to the Learning Express toy store was icing on the cake.

"When I drove around the neighborhoods, I saw a lot of swing sets, a lot of young families. Westgate felt more residential," Pam Turkin said. "When I look out of the store, it reminds me of my clientele in Livonia. We do better in a residential area rather than walk-in. In Livonia, we've become a destination."

They hope to sell 10,000 cupcake a month out of the Ann Arbor location and expect to employ three full-time and a few part-time staff.

They are building out their 1,150-square feet of retail space with a half-wall, counters and a seating area for 12 to 14, and hope to open by Feb. 8. They'll also sell cookies, scones, snack mix and dog biscuits and serve coffee from **Intelligentsia**, the popular Chicago coffee house. They also make cupcake towers for weddings and custom cakes and cupcakes.

They are also looking to open a Just Baked in Royal Oak by March 15 and two more locations in suburban Detroit in 2010. They also want to get their cupcakes into area restaurants and stores.

Cupcakes arrived in Ann Arbor before Just Baked: There's the **Cupcake Station** on East Liberty Street, **Cake Nouveau** on North Fourth Avenue (they are moving to Packard Road) and numerous other shops around Ann Arbor that sell cupcakes.



Pam Turkin, owner along with husband Todd Turkin, of **Just Baked** in Ann Arbor.

Janet Miller for AnnArbor.com

"Each one is so different," Pam Turkin said. "Our cupcakes are upscale, we have unusual flavors and they are conversation pieces. Each one looks like a little cake." On any given day, they will have up to 22 flavors (from pineapple upside down to red velvet and s'more) with more than 50 different flavors available storewide.

The soft economy hasn't hurt business and has even been a bonus, Pam Turkin said. It's made finding retail space easier. The manager at 12 Oaks Mall in Novi contacted them about opening Just Baked at the mall. That store opened Sept. 1.

All of the baking is done at the Livonia store at Seven Mile and Farmington roads where quality can be controlled, Pam Turkin said.

"It keeps the baking consistent," she said. "We know how to bake and distribute."

The centralized baking also offers an easier chance to grow. They don't need much space for their expansion stores, Pam Turkin said. They have eight bakers, including a new baker who will focus on vegan baking, something that will be featured at the Ann Arbor store. The vegan options will focus more on cookies and scones than cupcakes. They may eventually hire a decorator at the Ann Arbor store so decorating could take place on site.

While cupcakes have ridden a wave of popularity, they remain in strong demand, Pam Turkin said, "They're nostalgic, they are portion controlled and they are individualized. Instead of deciding what cake flavor 12 people will like, you can buy 12 flavors."



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