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Just Baked

Fat Elvis and other cupcakes

by *Tony McReynolds*

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Pam Turkin opened her first cupcake store by accident. "I overbaked," she says.

She'd been happily making cupcakes in her bakery in Livonia for resale to retailers for months--until the day she made too many. She had to get rid of the extra cupcakes but didn't want to throw them out, so she put an "open" sign in the window, and people just started showing up. "I think the first day we [sold] eighty-four cupcakes, and we were really excited."

When she put up the "open" sign again the next day and sold twice as many, Pam told her husband, Todd, they had to open their own cupcake store.

The first **Just Baked** opened in early 2009 in their wholesale bakery. A year later, Just Baked sells 7,000 cupcakes a week out of two stores, and the Turkins opened a third location in Westgate in mid-February. They'll open a fourth in Royal Oak this spring and are on track to add two more later this year.

Pam, forty-seven, used to work in marketing and advertising, a job that took her all over the country. A couple of years ago she noticed that cupcake stores were popping up on both coasts. An amateur baker whose cupcakes were popular with family, friends, and coworkers, she decided to give selling them a shot. She spent a year experimenting with recipes, then started selling what she describes as gourmet, jumbo cupcakes out of her kitchen at home. When several stores asked if they could carry them, she knew her home-baking days were over and moved the operation into a former German bakery that still had a working kitchen with baking ovens.

"Everything we do, we do from scratch," Pam says. "There's no artificial flavor, no shortening, and we make our own buttercream...and use real fruits and juices for flavoring."

Just Baked offers more than thirty kinds, including the Grumpy Cake Cupcake, a rich devil's food cake stuffed with vanilla buttercream, then topped with buttercream pillows and dipped in homemade icing; and the Fat Elvis Cupcake, a moist banana cake topped with peanut-butter buttercream and hand dipped in icing. All the gourmet cupcakes are \$2.25.

The baking is still done at the original Livonia location, and Pam doesn't bake as often as she used to--she leaves that to a team of bakers that includes a professional pastry chef. But she still experiments with new recipes and tests them on her family, deciding which recipes to keep based on how fast the cupcakes get eaten. "When you have five teenagers," she says, "it's a really good testing ground."

Just Baked, 2463 W. Stadium (Westgate). 585-5354. Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. www.justbakedshop.com

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