



## Just Baked opens cupcake production site in Livonia

With today's grand opening of its new 16,000-square-foot production facility in Livonia, Just Baked is taking the cupcake craze to a new level in metro Detroit.

The fast-growing cupcake chain is on track to bake more than 2 million cupcakes this year, is in the process of hiring 20 additional employees and hopes to add five more retail outlets by the end of the year.

"We really end up being the neighborhood bakery," said Just Baked co-founder Pam Turkin, a mother of five who taught herself to bake.

Turkin, 49, has come a long way from early 2009 when she and one employee used to make cupcakes with a Mixmaster electric kitchen mixer. Just Baked's new facility has room for three industrial ovens and a cake shop. The company, which has seven local stores, had outgrown its 2,000-square-foot production facility at 7 Mile and Farmington roads but wanted to stay in Livonia.

"We started this business in the worst time and they just lifted us up," Turkin said of the support from city officials and Livonia residents.

All of the chain's cupcakes are made daily in small batches at the new kitchen, which has the capacity to produce more than five million cupcakes a year. The company, which has 75 full and part-time employees, is both franchising and opening its own retail outlets.

Turkin estimates that by the end of 2012, Just Baked could have 25 to 27 stores in metro Detroit selling its sweet treats, which come in 65 flavors such as Grumpy Cake, Red Velvet and Fat Elvis. The company also recently began selling frozen two-pack versions of its cupcakes to [grocerystores](#) in Michigan and other Midwest states.

The expansion comes on the heels of new investment capital for Just Baked. Earlier this year, Turkin and her husband, Todd, sold 45% of their company to a group of top executives at Ferndale-based Garden Fresh Gourmet, including President Jack Aronson.

Sales at Just Baked have reached the \$3 million to \$4 million range, not bad for a

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company that started without a business plan. The company's average sale is half a dozen cupcakes. But Just Baked has seen increased demand for its cakes, including an order this week for a Motown-decorated cake for Jesse Jackson's 70th birthday party at the MGM Grand Detroit.

Turkin and her husband both grew up in Oak Park and met at the apparel distributor Broder Bros., where Turkin served as director of **marketing**. Turkin had visited cupcake stores on the East Coast and saw an opportunity to sell the desserts in the Detroit area. Just Baked's biggest competitor is Cupcake Station, which opened its first store in 2006 and now has four locations.

Just Baked constantly tries to invent new cupcake flavors, including seasonal varieties. Its wildest creation is the Big Oink, which is essentially devil's food cake with bacon bits dipped in ganache that's rolled in smokehouse almonds and topped with a piece of cayenne candied real bacon.

The company tests new creations at its original store in Livonia. A key part of its success has been making sure to supply each of its stores with just the right amount of cupcakes in order to keep waste at a minimum.

"Food is creative," said Turkin, whose business title is chief cupcake officer. "You really have to love it. It's hard work."

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Just Baked co-founders Todd and Pam Turkin.

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