

# BAKERY TOOLKIT

*How To Manage Your Business Through A Tough Economy*

## Seasonal Opportunities:

*Maximizing Your Seasonal Sales with Creative Products and Marketing Strategies Throughout the Year*



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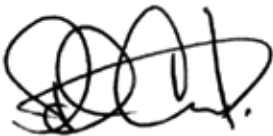
## Seasonal Opportunities

Seasons change, and so do bakery customers' buying habits. This is why it is imperative for you, the baker, to stay on top of the latest trends to take full advantage of seasonal opportunities throughout the year.

This *Bakery Toolkit* on seasonal opportunities in product development, marketing and merchandising is the third in 2010 of our popular series on profit tips for retail bakeries. Dawn Foods brings you research and insight from retail bakeries across the country to help you improve your bottom line.

From creative new product ideas to insightful marketing strategies on the Web, this *Bakery Toolkit* is designed with your needs in mind to help you grow your business.

At Dawn, we are pleased to bring the latest merchandising ideas from bakers who know their customers better than anyone. It is that personal touch that is so important in today's competitive environment, and we at Dawn are committed to helping you make the most of every opportunity.



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# Signature Splash

Make a splash with customers by creating signature sweet baked goods throughout the year. New products drive higher sales from one season to the next. So don't be shy; put your creative thinking caps on to develop signature items that make a definitive statement about your dedication to creativity and product excellence. Having a signature item also makes your bakery a destination for shoppers – a place shoppers purposefully seek for their needs.

Savvy merchandisers know how to take full advantage of each holiday by expanding the variety and the amount of product on display within product categories that perform best during each specific holiday. Rick Boone, owner of Rick's Bakery in the college town of Fayetteville, AR, expands the selection of jumbo-size fritters in October when college students are back in full numbers.

*In October, Weber's Bakery puts a creative spin on Halloween treats with its Halloween Race Cars.*



***Think of displays like an accordion. Open them wider during peak selling seasons and then close them up a little when the opportunity for sales within a particular product category is not as great.***

Weber's Bakery in Chicago takes full advantage of seasonal opportunities by producing unique products at different times of year. Halloween Race Cars are one signature dessert item that Weber's Bakery starts making in mid-October for the weeks leading up to Halloween. These chocolate-covered snack cakes are adorned with decorative pics (witches, bats and ghosts) on top and decorated with tiny pumpkins on the side. The Halloween Race Cars sell for \$3.49 apiece.

Owner Michael Weber says he looks at seasonal marketing as a highly effective tool to drive customer traffic into the bakery and create a buzz for new products. By bringing in new products that rotate in and out, he finds that customers tend to pay a premium for signature items that they know are only going to be available for a brief period of time. When summer arrives, Peach Squares and Plum Squares from Weber's Bakery attract customers looking for fruit flavors during warmer weather. They only sell Plum Squares when fresh plum harvest starts, a marketing tactic that connects customers to the freshness factor of new crop fruit. That

also helps Weber's Bakery get a premium price. The bakery introduced another new product called Cannoli Cake just in time for the end of summer.

Zingerman's Bakehouse in Ann Arbor, MI, offers a signature product called the Magic Brownie, which it promotes heavily during the holidays for individual sale and in gift baskets. It's a large chocolate brownie with toasted walnuts. They make about 350,000 brownies each year. "People know our Magic Brownies in Ann Arbor and all over the country," says Amy Emberling, managing partner at Zingerman's Bakehouse, which also sells its product through an online catalog at [www.zingermans.com](http://www.zingermans.com).

*The following are major holidays for seasonal promotions, but stay abreast of happenings in your local market to capitalize on seasonal events like county fairs and special celebrations.*

#### **SPECIAL OCCASIONS 2010-11**

##### **October**.....

Weekends – Tailgating  
Oct. 14 – National Dessert Day  
Oct. 16 – Sweetest Day  
Oct. 31 – Halloween

##### **November**.....

Nov. 11 – Veterans Day  
Nov. 25 – Thanksgiving  
Nov. 26 – Black Friday

##### **December**.....

Dec. 1 – Hanukkah Begins  
Dec. 4 – National Cookie Day  
Dec. 8 – National Brownie Day  
Dec. 25 – Christmas  
Dec. 26 – Kwanzaa

##### **January**.....

Jan. 1 – New Year's Day  
Jan. 6 – Three Kings Day

## **FAST FACT**

Dawn research reveals that consumers satisfy their cravings most often with cookies and cakes.

Courtney Clark, award-winning cake decorator and owner of Cake Nouveau in Ann Arbor, MI, believes the rising popularity of customized sculpted cakes gives bakeries more room to take full advantage of seasonal opportunities. Her sculpted cakes include summer-inspired creations like Surf'N Turf (decorated like a beach picnic) and Nightmare Before Xmas (decorated with spooky characters). Customers are eager for anything unique. "People are getting more daring. They are seeing all these crazy things on TV and they want to have that too," says Clark, who consults for Dawn Food Products on bakery techniques and trends. "People want louder colors and anything that is really personal to them."

Dawn research shows bakery purchases are more impulse than planned, and this trend is on the rise. Personalized and customized cakes, cookies, donuts and sweet baked goods play a valuable role in driving higher impulse sales. Using this knowledge can help you plan out new signature products that help maximize seasonal sales throughout the year.

# Catering for Profit

The first step in turning your catering business into a more profitable segment is by promoting your ability to turn seasonal occasions into extraordinary events that clients will remember forever.

Zingerman's Catering and Events in Ann Arbor, MI, serves catering customers from as far away as Chicago, Cleveland and Indiana. This innovative bakery/deli launched its own catering business in 1982. Catered celebrations include weddings, corporate events, bar and bat mitzvahs, birthday parties, tailgate parties, and summer picnics.

Fall is a perfect time to be thinking of tailgate parties, and Zingerman's offers a great example of how to market to such occasions with its Grab and Go Tailgate package. Priced at \$15.50 per person, the package includes a Zingerman's Deli sandwich or salad, potato chips, Black

*Magic Brownies are a signature product for Zingerman's booming catering business.*



**Build a hook for your catering business around a signature item that is fun and delicious, like the Zingerman's Magic Brownies.**

Magic Brownie and pickle all packaged in an easy to carry Zingerman's red bag.

Wedding cakes are another key component of Zingerman's catering business, and cake artists at Zingerman's Bakehouse specialize in whimsical and creative cake creations, which are featured in the Zingerman's Bakehouse Cake Showroom. Amy Emberling, managing partner of Zingerman's Bakehouse, says the showroom is filled with custom-decorated cakes in various shapes and sizes to allow brides to understand the presence of cake they want at their big event. "Our wedding cake room gives brides the feel for the luxury of what their wedding may be like," Emberling says. Another great tip from Zingerman's is they call every bride three weeks before her wedding to go over every detail of her wedding cake order to ensure there are no misunderstandings.

When it comes to off-premise catering, one of the most common mistakes that caterers make is pricing their menu instead of pricing the event, according to catering experts. Catering is a business that is full of hidden costs. It's not like pricing the donuts sold in your retail case; you know the costs involved and



can price donuts without a lot of extra thought. But what you don't know about the hidden costs of any catered event can certainly hurt your profits.

The first rule of thumb, according to professional caterers, is not to give a price until you completely understand what the buyer wants to do and where they want the event to take place.

For smaller events, you may be simply selling the catered products but not handling set up and/or delivery. But if your bakery does off-premise catering, make sure to investigate the site of the event thoroughly. The following items, according to Michael Roman, president of Catersource, are a list of direct and indirect costs that you need to factor into your price to ensure you are getting a fair profit:

- **Food Costs:** Everything that goes into the food production for an event needs to be factored into the final price. Don't forget everything from the large (cakes, deli meats, cheeses) to the small (the parsley you use as garnish).
- **Labor Costs:** These costs are the wages of your employees who prepare the menus and the time it takes them to make everything. Typically, these are hourly wages.
- **Operational Costs:** These are the fixed costs of your business: rent, truck payments, and other fixed costs.
- **Profit:** Some caterers determine the amount of profit they wish and place it into the final price.

## FAST FACT

Dawn Foods offers indulgent, ready to sell brownie platters that are perfect for catered events.

- **Cost of Sale:** Some caterers place their plastic wrap and other disposables into this category.
- **Delivery:** Wages of delivery staff, gas and maintenance go into this category.
- **Set-up Costs:** These are all costs for setting up the event.
- **Pre-Party Costs:** Food samplings and gas for your salespeople travelling to and from the client's location are a few examples of pre-party costs.
- **Insurance:** Some portion of your insurance premium needs to be placed into each and every price you build.
- **Degree of Difficulty Penalty:** More caterers are learning to add a little bit more to cover the costs of more difficult events like tent weddings.
- **Extra Meals:** The client should pay for all extra meals needed to feed the band, valet parkers and the event photographer.

Catering can be profitable; the key is understanding how to market your services to customers celebrating seasonal events throughout the year. Leverage signature items as a hook to promote your bakery and make sure to account for your costs.

# Flavor Inspiration

Seasonal flavors can infuse excitement and drive higher impulse sales for your sweet baked goods. Depending on the time of year, Courtney Clark will seek inspiration for new flavors for her cakes and cupcakes at Cake Nouveau by checking out the menus at restaurants or even scanning the aisles of her local grocery store. “There are always new flavors in bottled drinks, like superfruits: acai berry and pomegranate,” says the owner of Cake Nouveau in Ann Arbor, MI. “Cereal companies are always coming out with new flavors, too.” Doing your homework keeps your bakery in step with the current trends. Bakeries can look at flavors and ideas coming from culinary magazines, great independent restaurants and other “leading edge” sources. The payoffs are more satisfied customers and bigger profits. You will never know what flavors will be in vogue next month or next season.

*Chez Ru Rene focuses on “comfort” flavors like mint and chocolate during the winter months.*



**\$** *Be sure to include comfort flavors during Thanksgiving and Christmas. Flavors like mint and cinnamon make people think of home.*

Dawn has conducted extensive research on consumer trends and offers valuable insight on profitable strategies for driving higher sales. Dawn research reveals that 63% of donut consumption takes place outside of the morning, leaving a big opportunity for more interesting flavors that can play up to the consumers’ afternoon cravings. Consider pushing the envelope in your donut flavor offerings like Frost Doughnuts in Mill Creek, WA, which offers flavor-inspired donuts such as Malted Milk Chocolate and Marcona Almond & Tart Cherry Bismarck. Leveraging “expanded” fruit names helps play up on flavors that each donut delivers.

Merritt’s Bakery in Tulsa, OK, offers another lesson in boosting your profitability: Make sure to charge extra for unique flavors and fillings. Merritt’s adds anywhere from \$5 to \$10 to the retail price of its party cakes for fillings like German chocolate, fresh strawberries, and chocolate whipped cream.

In general, it’s wise to rotate in two or three new flavors each month within product categories like donuts, cakes, cookies and sweet baked goods to keep

customers hungry for more. Mark Bastian, Product Specialist for Dawn Food Products, points out that back-to-school season in September means the beginning of increased demand for such flavors as apple, spicy pumpkin, gingerbread, and cranberry. Avalon Bakery in Detroit capitalizes on consumer demand for pumpkin flavors with its special Pumpkin Whoopie Pies.

Terry Monk, owner of Chez Ru Rene Bakery in New Orleans, says she finds that more and more often customers are seeking out particular flavors during the spring, summer, fall and winter. Fruit flavors like orange, strawberry and lemon are favorites in the spring and summer. “For each season there’s a flavor people look for, like mint and cinnamon during the holidays,” she says. “If you don’t put these flavors out there, people don’t come

### SPECIAL OCCASIONS 2011

#### February.....

Feb. 6 – Super Bowl

Feb. 14 – Valentine’s Day

Feb. 21 – President’s Day

#### March .....

March 8 – Mardi Gras, National Paczki Day

March 9 – Ash Wednesday

March 17 – St. Patrick’s Day

#### April.....

April 1 – Baseball Opening Day

April 15 – Tax Day

April 22 – Good Friday

April 24 – Easter

#### May.....

May 5 – Cinco de Mayo

May 8 – Mother’s Day

Mid-May – Graduation Season Begins

May 30 – Memorial Day

## FAST FACT

Sweet baked goods play a role in helping consumers achieve feelings of happiness, indulgence and pampering, according to Dawn research.

back to you. In the fall, people look for more things with pecan, pumpkin, and sweet potato. We do a sweet potato raisin muffin in the fall. When we put the banner sign out, saying they’re back, people come in and buy them by the dozen.”

Unique sweet and savory fillings can help you add elegance and profits to your bottom line. For the fall season, popular sweet flavors include honey, milk chocolate, and chocolate with bacon. Savory flavors are especially popular in the fall and winter, including bacon, brown butter, black garlic, and saffron. Frost Doughnuts in the Seattle area offers a great example of how to blend sweet and savory into one for the fall season with its Aztec Chocolate donut, which is a chocolate cake donut iced with cinnamon-cayenne chocolate and topped with gourmet chocolate shavings.

Offering both sweet and savory flavors in your selections of sweet baked goods can encourage customers to try new flavors as well as attract new customers.

# Seasonal Merchandising

Dawn research reveals that consumers select sweet baked goods for three main reasons: freshness, cravings and product appearance. These three factors, therefore, need to be paramount to how you promote and present your bakery products to consumers throughout the different seasons of the year.

Deerfields Bakery, with three locations in the north Chicago suburbs, supports its holiday promotions with instore signage, unique seasonal flavors and promotional brochures. Just for Halloween, Deerfields makes eight types of Halloween cupcakes (including Frankenstein and Mummy), four varieties of single-serve cakes, three special flavors of two-layer cakes, three kinds of Halloween coffee cakes, more than a dozen unique holiday centerpiece cakes, and nearly two dozen types of iced and decorated Halloween cookies (aliens, bats, skulls, tombs, etc.)

*Deerfields Bakery uses seasonal merchandising displays to clue in customers to special products for the holidays.*



**\$** *Get creative with 3-layer tortes for different seasons, like Deerfields' Cherries in the Snow Torte (perfect for December) or the Irish Mist (for St. Patrick's Day).*

Haydel's Bakery in New Orleans turns Mardi Gras season in January and February into a merchandising extravaganza by creating unique displays of King Cakes surrounded with green and gold beads, along with "A Taste of the Big Easy" gift boxes, which contain sweet baked goods, savory dips, soup mixes, and other local New Orleans favorites.

Paying close attention to your merchandising style and how your bakery looks to customers can be as important to your success as the dedication you make every day to producing high-quality sweet baked goods.

Another important aspect of seasonal merchandising is knowing when to create bigger displays to maximize sales during high demand periods. Here are some examples of when sweet baked goods sell best throughout the year:

- Christmas and Valentine's Day are the top holidays for cookie sales. The week leading up to Christmas is the top week for sales of cookie platters.
- Sweet baked goods like éclairs, cannoli, and cream puffs sell best during

the week of Valentine's Day. Other top weeks are Easter, Mother's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

- For cakes, Mother's Day and Easter rank as the top-selling holidays. Mother's Day is the No. 1 sales week of the year for decorated cakes.

As more boutique bakeries pop up across the country, a new merchandising style is emerging that favors pastels, softer colors and more cross merchandising of creative cards and gifts. Many boutique bakeries rely on seasonal accents like wicker baskets or vintage jars filled with cookies or muffins during the spring and fall, which can do wonders for enhancing your bakery's image and clue in customers to seasonal specials. The interior of PinkaBella Cupcakes in Seattle is decorated in a combination of pinks and browns, and merchandising accents can be found on every counter. During the spring, PinkaBella uses a clear cookie jar filled with multi-colored birthday candles as an accent over its display case of multiple flavors and colors of cupcakes. Cupcakes are attractively displayed on white countertops behind glass, with chandelier-type lighting fixtures located throughout the store.

Another aspect of the boutique bakery merchandising trend is the promotion of more single-serve decadent desserts, such as \$3 cupcakes, \$2.50 gourmet donuts and other unique treats geared for today's smaller households. Del Hernandez, co-owner of Frost Doughnuts in Mill Creek, WA, says they find a warm reception to

## FAST FACT

Bakery shoppers will pay a premium for seasonal items that are offered for only a limited time.

their gourmet donuts from customers who love Frost's unique flavors, which rotate throughout different seasons of the year. Back-to-school promotions include the PB&J 2.0, a bismarck filled with grape jelly and topped with creamy peanut butter. A large banner inside the retail store showcases Frost's three donut categories: "classic, premium and evolved," with choices listed in easy-to-read letters.

"We have our classic donuts, which are raised glazed. Those are 99 cents," Hernandez says. "Our premium line – donuts with frostings or sprinkles – are \$1.49. Then we have our evolved line, like our Salted Caramel donuts. Those are \$1.89." Promoting gourmet seasonal flavors helps ease any sticker shock that customers may feel. "Our pricing is definitely higher than our local grocery store. The first month we had a lot of people say your donuts are higher. As soon as they tasted it, they kept coming back. What we hear now is your donuts are worth it."

Creative products and displays like these can help you win more seasonal sales. Take advantage of seasonal merchandising ideas to put your best food forward.

# Creative Marketing

Creative marketing can involve anything from creating email newsletters to promoting new products and specials on your website. Online, the opportunity to reach and influence customer purchasing habits is endless because more consumers are connecting to local businesses every day through social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Promoting your bakery's seasonal specials online and through social networking is a perfect way to drive higher traffic to your bakery by connecting to consumers who are looking for anything new and exciting during different times of year.

Max Fried, who manages his family's Freed's Bakery in Las Vegas, NV, points out that the popularity of the Internet is having a profound effect on small business and its ability to do low-cost marketing. In May, Freed's Bakery used its Facebook site to promote a special event

*Cake Nouveau offers a convenient sign-up register for its email newsletter in the retail store.*



**\$** *Food is trendy right now, so take advantage of customers' growing appetite for searching online to find new products, new flavors, new promotions and more.*

called "Educakation Celebration" during Teacher Appreciation Week. The bakery also started a trivia contest on Facebook earlier this year, starting with one question: How many cakes did Freed's Bakery make in March? The top five answers from customers would win a gift certificate to Freed's Bakery. Fried wondered if anyone would participate. Then the responses came in: 300 in the first 12 hours. Fried was amazed. "Once you give prizes out, people come back to you and say thank you. That's when we realized how powerful social networking can be." Now, Freed's bakery continues the successful trivia contest each month with new questions related to the time of year.

Freed's Bakery launched its own email newsletter two years ago and now reaches 25,000 customers each month, driving traffic to its website ([www.freedsbakery.com](http://www.freedsbakery.com)). A year ago, the bakery built its own Facebook page, where it posts photos of its latest cakes and shares news about upcoming promotions in the bakery. Videos are coming soon. Its Facebook fan base is now 3,700 and growing. "Facebook is a powerful tool and a great way to stay connected to your customers," says Joni

Fried, the owner of Freed's Bakery who adds that she believes social networking may have saved a huge part of their business during the economic downturn. Their overall sales are up, even though wedding cake business – the cornerstone of their bakery – is down significantly from two years ago. "It's bringing us a new wave of customers, and the people coming to social networking sites are really good customers because they choose to find you," she says.

There are a few simple ways to build an email database of customers before you get started with an email marketing campaign. It's important to get customers' permission first before sending them any offers. Deerfields Bakery in Chicago includes a spot on the home page of its website ([www.deerfieldsbakery.com](http://www.deerfieldsbakery.com)) for visitors to type in their email address to join Deerfields' newsletter mailing list.

At Cake Nouveau in Ann Arbor, MI, there's a sign-up sheet for its weekly email newsletter in the retail store. Courtney Clark, owner of Cake Nouveau, says they do a wide range of things to raise aware-

## FAST FACT

Enjoying a new and unique dessert is the No. 1 dessert trend in America for 2010, according to The Food Channel.

ness about the latest happenings at their bakery. "We do a lot with Facebook, we have our website ([www.cakenouveau.com](http://www.cakenouveau.com)), and we do an email newsletter," Clark says. "Our newsletter brings a lot of people in. We do coupons and specials, like buy two cupcakes and get two free. Our newsletter goes out to 2,500 people. That is our best advertising."

Cake Nouveau also advertises their new cake decorating classes to let their Facebook fans know how they can become cake decorators, too. "Our new classes have definitely built the business," Clark says. "People are coming in who might not have ever come in before, and some are driving at least a couple hours to come and take the class. I think it is helping us a lot by giving us a lot more exposure." A central part of opening a new Cake Nouveau location this year was having enough space for a cake decorating classroom, which is colorfully decorated with purple and green walls. They teach both kids and adults. This type of creative marketing can be instrumental in any bakery's growth and helps make sure you are a bakery destination.

### SPECIAL OCCASIONS 2011

#### June.....

June 3 – National Donut Day

June 19 – Father's Day

#### July.....

July 4 – Independence Day

#### August.....

Aug. 7 – National Friendship Day

Mid-August – Back to School

#### September.....

Sept. 5 – Labor Day

Sept. 11 – Grandparent's Day

# Great Finishes

Great finishes start with the right tools. To make your sweet baked goods dazzle the crowds during each season of the year, try these ideas on for size.

Kirk Rossberg of Torrance Bakery in Torrance, CA, offers a classical step for finishing touches by using gold icing to adorn custom-decorated cakes for special occasions. “Gold is great for 50th anniversary cakes, and we are doing a lot of birthday cakes with the gold,” Rossberg says. “Gold icing makes cakes appear more upscale, and the good part is you can charge more money for your cakes.” Think of the fall, when the seasonal fall colors turn to gold, as a perfect time of year to play up finishing touches in gold.

Some bakers ice in white and then paint their icing gold. Rossberg offers an alternative method that can save time and money. He places gold dust in

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*Atwood's Bakery uses the new Cricut Cake machine to adorn Furry Monster cupcakes with gumpaste graduation hats.*



**\$** *Don't forget that adding an attractive bow to the top of a cake package transforms it from an everyday item to a special gift.*

a plastic cup and adds canola oil to make a paste. Then he coats the inside of a parchment piping bag to cover the inside with gold paste. Then he adds white icing to the piping bag and starts piping finishing touches like gold roses or happy birthday messages in gold. “A little bit of gold goes a long way on a cake, and it comes out in a nice metallic gold color,” he says. “You can pipe directly with the gold, so you don’t have to paint the white icing.” You can also make a gold-tipped flower by painting just one edge of the piping bag with a stripe of gold. Then add icing to your piping bag, making sure the toe of your tip is aligned with the gold, and pipe gold-tipped flowers with ease.

One of the newest tools available for cake decorators to save labor when producing finishing touches is the Cricut Cake machine, which was introduced in early 2010. Jennifer Atwood, general manager of Atwood's Bakery in Alexandria, LA, relies on the Cricut Cake machine to cut and mass-produce unique designs like the fleur de lis, an iconic symbol of New Orleans. Atwood's Bakery sold more cakes and cookies with the fleur de lis symbol on the day before the New Orleans Saints won the 2010 Super Bowl

than any other day of the year. The Cricut Cake can mass-produce cutout designs in fondant, gumpaste, Sugarveil, Satin Ice, Chocopan molding chocolate, and other icing sheets. For more information, visit [www.cuttingedgecakeart.com](http://www.cuttingedgecakeart.com). Using gumpaste cutouts, Atwood's Bakery turns its ever-popular "Furry Monster" cupcakes, which retail for \$3.65 apiece, into princesses, cowboys or even graduates wearing gumpaste graduation hats cut by the Cricut Cake machine.

Rotating colors is also important to unique finishing touches. Mark Bastian, Product Specialist for Dawn Foods, suggests using seasonal colors to decorate cakes and sweet baked goods in colors that are appropriate to the time of year. Fleckenstein's Bakery in Chicago uses orange and brown icing dots on top of its Halloween Dot Cookies, and rotates other colors for holidays at different times.

Another important finishing touch relates to your bakery packaging. "I really love to see when people change some of their packaging and make a beautiful box that goes with the season," Bastian says. "A lot of times at the end of the year, there is a lot more entertaining going on, and customers can bring a cake to the party that shows like they are bringing in a gift box. For 20 cents more, you can have something that really stands out."

Some finishing touches are extremely simple, like this one from Courtney Clark of Cake Nouveau in Ann Arbor, MI. "I'll use a towel and press it on fondant and that will give it a different texture," Clark

## FAST FACT

Using labor-saving tools to reproduce unique finishing touches on a mass scale is important.

says. This simple technique can be used to add texture to a beach scene cake. Other tools can be used to construct various sculptures for seasonal cakes. "A lot of our tools come from Home Depot; we don't use anything fancy."

Terry Monk, owner of Chez Ru Rene Bakery, says one of their most popular finishing touches is placing a "sculpted petit four" on top of an iced and decorated layer cake. The sculpted petit four is made from almond cake that is molded into a special shape (according to the customer's request) and covered in fondant, then adorned with embellishments. Finally, the sculpture is placed on top of a cake. Some of its most popular designs are ketchup bottles (perfect for picnic occasions) and golf balls (for Father's Day). "First, we cut a cardboard pattern for the design," Monk says. "Then we build the structure with the petit fours, rounding it and shaping it and then pouring the fondant over the sculpture," she says. "It adds dimension to the cake. Customers love it." Unique finishing touches like these examples can bring more business to your bakery by setting you apart and showcasing your special skills.

# Tips and Trends from Courtney Clark



CLARK

As owner of specialty bakery Cake Nouveau in Ann Arbor, MI, Courtney Clark is an expert in creating “edible art” with cakes and cupcakes. Her education in the fine arts and her passion for baking combine to create a style and expertise unique to the industry. In this issue, Clark demonstrates an exciting new product, Cake Truffles, which offers you a creative way to address seasonal opportunities.

“Small, single-serving products are really huge right now. So we started doing Cake Truffles, little balls of cake and buttercream mixed together. I recently went to Chicago and saw it was being done all over. When I came back to Ann Arbor, we took it up a notch – by dipping it in chocolate and making it more gourmet.”

“We stick to two cake flavors all the time – Vanilla Birthday Cake with sprinkles inside and Chocolate Birthday Cake with sprinkles inside – and then we use whatever extra seasonal cake we have on hand. We do other flavors like Strawberry Shortcake, Carrot Cake, and Chocolate Mint.”

“We mix up the extra cake and buttercream into little cake balls and then put them in the cooler and wait for them to get cold. Then we cover them in chocolate and decorate it. I did not anticipate how well it would take off. Now we can use up our extra cake and make a little money on it.”



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