

CAKE

FROM PAGE B1

ating. Today she's a chef in high demand whose wedding cake schedule is booked well into the year. She also squeezes in a few birthday, anniversary and bat and bar mitzvahs to a few lucky customers.

Bommarito can create whatever the client wants: A replica of a treasure chest — with coins and sparkling jewels made of sugary edibles; a three-dimensional buttercream frosting-furry dog cake that resembled an owner's pet; hockey and princess cakes; trains; movie marquees and traditional white wedding cakes with fresh flowers.

"My clients and I brainstorm together," she said. "I learn of their loves, interests or hobbies and from there we get our ideas."

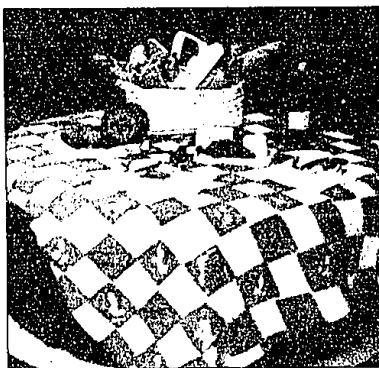
Bommarito also is a culinary arts instructor who teaches cooking and cake decorating courses throughout the tri-county area. She even offers in-house cooking courses as gifts.

Her experience in food is lifelong, she said. Her father owned Bommarito's Sausages on the east side and quality food was always a family priority. The energetic chef originally planned to work in advertising, but realized she missed the food world. So she moved to New York.

There she was trained in culinary and pastry arts at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in Manhattan during the 1990s. Four years later, she landed a job as a chef in Martha Stewart's test kitchen.

A career highlight was appearing as a guest on Stewart's show where Bommarito showed the nation her skills. Her creations: A miniature garden, which was actually a cake. Everything on it was edible including the sugary artichoke crop, green grass and white picket fences on top.

"Even though I worked as a chef for years it wasn't until I heard Martha introduce me as 'Pastry Chef Michelle



Notice the flow, red-and-white checkered tablecloth made purely of edible ingredients for this chocolate cake. Bommarito designed the edible picnic basket, bread and miniature foods for the top.

Bommarito that I realized I made it."

Working in a kitchen meant little time was spent working with people. She relocated to Michigan and wanted the creative freedom of cake design, plus it gave her the opportunity to be back into the world with human contact.

Today her clients call upon her repeatedly.

Hallie Moss of Birmingham has hired Bommarito on numerous occasions. The first was to create her off-white, engagement cake that was dusted in silver. Later Bommarito made Moss' four-foot-tall chocolate-raspberry ganache wedding cake etched with copper detailing.

"The cake was absolutely beautiful," Moss said. "Michelle was at my wedding the entire day dipping strawberries in chocolate and filling eclairs."

Last week Bommarito made a leopard print cake for a Moss' aunt and niece's 50th birthday party.

"It was gorgeous," Moss said. "I've tasted many cakes, many wedding cakes, and Michelle's are the best. Her attention to detail is astounding and she's just a pleasure."

BUY SUPPLIES

Visit cake decorating stores for easy-to-use decorating supplies, including Heinrichs, 8160 E. 10 Mile Rd., in Center Line (Phone: (586) 758-5100) or The Kitchen Witch, 134 E. Main St., Northville (Phone: (248) 348-0488).

LEARN WELL

The above businesses also host culinary courses. The following locations also host Bommarito's culinary and pastry classes: The Community House, 380 S. Bates St., Birmingham (Phone: (248) 593-6956); Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation, call (248) 473-1800 for locations; and Bloomfield Hills Recreation and Community Services, call for locations at (248) 645-4807.

Advice for baking the perfect cake

Michelle Bommarito is a pastry chef, culinary instructor and cake decorator of elegant and whimsical wedding and special cakes. She shared some tips on how to bake and decorate a cake at home.

PLAN WELL

■ Don't buy the ingredients, bake the cake and decorate it all on the same day as your party. "Bake the cake one day before you are going to decorate it," Bommarito said. "Refrigerating the cake makes frosting it easier anyway."

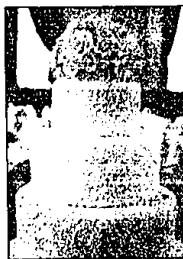
BAKE WELL

■ Know how to measure. Don't measure the flour by scooping the cup into the flour bag. First fluff the flour in the bag with fork. Then use a spoon to spoon flour into the cup and then level it off neatly.

■ Cocoa, granulated and brown sugar can be packed into a measuring cup. Flour should not be firmly packed.

■ Grease the cake pan with vegetable shortening. Just moments prior to pouring the batter, dust pan with flour. If you dust too early, the vegetable oil will absorb into the flour.

■ Fill the cake pan only halfway with batter. If a pan is overfilled, the cake will not cook thoroughly.



Brides looking for a pure white cake can enjoy simple elegance. Chocolate raspberry ganache is a favorite requested by couples today.

"Use the extra batter to bake cupcakes," Bommarito suggested. "This way you can sample the cake."

■ Know the proper oven temperature.

"If a recipe calls for 350°," she said, "All ovens are different. Use an oven thermometer for accurate temperatures."

■ Don't open that oven door. Repeatedly opening it can impact the baking process.

"Cakes rise because of steam and heat. You lost a lot of heat every time the oven door is

opened," Bommarito said. "If you need to see the cake use the light."

■ Place the cake in the middle oven rack to ensure even baking.

■ Test cake five minutes prior to scheduled completion time. Use a toothpick to check center. Also, if the cake has shrunk away from the side of the pan, it is probably done or nearly done.

■ When cake is baked, let it cool. Use a wire rack to allow cool air to flow along the bottom of the pan. Don't set pan on a counter top — doing so will cause carry-over cooking time.

FROST WELL

■ Refrigerate cake to chill it prior to decorating.

Apply a not-too-thick layer of frosting around the cake. Refrigerate it for at least 15 minutes. Then apply the next layer of frosting and chill again. Repeat the chilling process with each layer for a smoothly, ridge-free frosted cake.

■ Use pastry bags with star tips to decorate. The frosting stars, topped with colored confectionery candies can give a professional touch to a home-made cake.

By Lana Muri

CAKE RECIPE

CHOCOLATE RASPBERRY GANACHE CAKE

6 ounces semisweet chocolate
6 ounces unsweetened chocolate
6 eggs, separated
1 cup butter
2 cups white sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 cup all-purpose flour
3/4 cup heavy whipping cream
6 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
2 8-ounce packages frozen raspberries, thawed
1/4 cup seedless raspberry preserves

Preheat oven to 300° F. Grease two 9-inch round cake pans.

Melt 6 ounces of semisweet chocolate and 6 ounces of unsweetened chocolate in the top of a double boiler. Cool, and beat in egg yolks. In a large bowl, beat butter, 1 1/2 cups sugar, and vanilla until light and fluffy. Add chocolate mixture, and continue beating until smooth. Stir in flour until just combined. In another bowl, beat egg whites until foamy. Gradually beat in remaining 1/2 cup sugar, and continue beating until the whites hold soft peaks. Fold whites into chocolate batter. Pour batter into prepared pans. Bake for 45 minutes or until toothpick in center comes out clean. Cool 5 minutes in pan, then turn out onto rack to cool completely.

Ganache

In a saucepan, bring cream just to a boil. Add the chopped semisweet chocolate and stir into the cream. Remove saucepan from heat, and continue stirring until smooth. Pour into bowl, and press sheet of plastic wrap directly against surface of chocolate to prevent formation of a skin. Refrigerate until thick enough to spread. Assemble.

Drain the thawed raspberries, if necessary, and combine with the preserves. Sandwich the cake layers with raspberry filling. Spread top and sides with chocolate ganache.

Source: Baking Bits Corp

TASTE CALENDAR

Desserts

Chef Richard Michels of Give Thanks Bakery in Rochester will present Light and Lively Spring Fruit and Mousse Desserts 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Thursday, April 3, at Bella Cucina, 2505 Orchard Lake Road, in Sylvan Lake. Michels will instruct complete presentation of raspberry mousse and lemon mousse, butterscotch tart variations, fruit flan, fruit mousse torte and decorating with fruit. Payment of \$30 per person is required with registration form in advance of the class. Call Trevettrow at (248) 377-2300 for information.

Nanny's Kitchen

Nanny's Kitchen, 304 East Street in Rochester Hills, offers spring cooking classes, including Made It Myself (for ages 4-10) where children will learn to prepare nutritious foods, enjoy desserts and design their own cookbook. Ages 4-7 will meet for four Thursdays, starting April 3, 4-5:30 p.m., and ages 8-10 will meet for five Wednesdays, starting April 2, 4-5:30 p.m. Fees are \$60 for children aged 4-7 and \$200 for children aged 8-10. A class for Beginner Chefs (ages 11 and up) will instruct young teens on menu planning, reading recipes, shopping lists and kitchen safety. This class

meets 7-8:30 p.m. for five weeks on Tuesdays, starting April 1. Fees are \$200. Adults can learn how to simplify recipes, coordinate side dishes and present foods in an attractive way. This class meets for five weeks on Wednesdays 7-9 p.m., starting on April 2. Fees are \$200. A second class meets for four Thursdays, starting April 3, 12:30-2:30 p.m. Fees are \$160. Call Nanny's Kitchen at (248) 651-1622 for information.

Orlil Thirlia

Learn how to get more flavor from grilled foods, dry rubs, safe food handling and about different woods and charcoal at "Thrill O' the Grill" class Wednesday, April 9, at Royal Oak Kimball High School, room K159. Participants receive a CD-ROM or world championship grill recipes and 500 summer campout recipes. Create a tasty dry rub rub to take home. Bring one clean pint (small) canning jar and lid (from hardware store). There is a \$10 materials fee paid at class and \$12 tuition. Call the Royal Oak Community Education office at (248) 588-5050 to enroll (pre-registration required).

Pacific Rim


Explore the tastes of the Pacific Rim and discover the mysteries of Asian

cuisine at Oakland Community College's Orchard Ridge campus. Student culinarians will guide you through a five-course dinner fantasy with wine included, on Thursday, April 10. Fare is only \$50 per guest. Students in the Culinary Arts and Restaurant Management programs are in charge of planning, organizing and executing this meal. Tickets are usually sold out. To reserve your seat, call (248) 522-3700.

Southern Cooking

Doris Tachell, test editor for Taste of Home magazine, will demonstrate the wonderful art of southern style cooking: fried chicken, milk gravy, home-made biscuits and pie will be featured. This class is scheduled 7-9 p.m. Friday, April 25 at Nanny's Kitchen, 304 East Street, Rochester, MI 48307. Cost is \$45 per person. For information, visit www.nannyskitchen.com or call (248) 651-1622.

Do you have an item for the Taste calendar? Please submit it at least two weeks before the event to Ken Abramczyk, Taste editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009 or email kabramczyk@oehomecomm.net



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