

Business is sweet for rapidly expanding Cutesy Cupcakes

By Carol Carson
Press-Banner

While many businesses, large and small, are closing in our tight economy, Scotts Valley-based Cutesy Cupcakes is not only surviving — the locally owned and operated bakery is rapidly expanding.

In June, the multi-generational team of owners Jeanette Fitzgearl and her daughter Lacey Thompson, along with Janeen Thompson — Jeanette's mother and Lacey's grandmother, opened their second store in the Capitola Mall.

The opening of the new location comes less than two years after the trio first transitioned from an online business and opened their original Scotts Valley location in December 2012.

In the next couple months, the Scotts Valley store will relocate to a larger store behind Taco Bell on Mount Hermon Road and the owners are adding a food truck service.

Why have Cutesy Cupcakes been so successful?

"Our (cupcakes) are yummy and cute," said Janeen Thompson. "Somebody can go out and get a cupcake for \$2.85 and it keeps them satisfied all day ... you may not be able to buy a car but everyone has \$2.85."

San Jose is next, she said, adding that Cutesy Cupcakes' distinctive black-and-pink van with white polka dots will soon be heading over Highway 17 to participate in Off the Grid, a food truck rally with over 100 participants from all over the Bay Area.

The van will join 20 trucks at different locations a few days a week selling their Cutesy Cupcakes.

With culinary diplomas in hand, Fitzgearl and Lacey Thompson were at a crossroads a few years ago.

Fitzgearl said that she knew what she wanted — to be her own boss instead of an employee — and it was her that motivated the others to join in the undertaking.

"We decided we wanted something easy to make without getting into a too complicated business plan starting out," said Janeen Thompson.

Much of the business, she said, involves special orders with themes like baby showers and birthdays.

"Cupcakes are a little self-contained piece of art," Thompson said. "Sometimes they look too cute to eat."

When a podiatrist's office opened, she said, the staff asked Cutesy Cupcakes to make cupcakes for their grand opening.

"We had little molded feet and we put them all in different colors," Thompson said. "Actually, we have around 100 different molds of all imaginable things — we melt chocolate and customize the colors."

Cutesy Cupcakes hit the big time when they made an audition video and were chosen to appear on Food Network's "Cupcake Wars" in Los Angeles.

They did not win, but rumor has it that, unlike other contestants, they were not given the opportunity to try out the oven they would be baking in.

On judgment day, the oven they used did not bake like one in their store in Scotts Valley. When the buzzer went off, the cupcakes were undercooked.

Battered, but unbowed, the trio came back home.

When the new Scotts Valley store opens, Thompson said, the

business will be adding frozen yogurt to their menu.

Though the most popular cupcake, she said, has been the red velvet cupcake — a confection topped with cream cheese frosting and embellished with a red, white chocolate heart — other flavors, such as the salted caramel and milk chocolate cupcake, are close behind.

With an expanding business, the original trio is finding themselves functioning on very little sleep, Thompson said, meaning that they actively hiring.

When will they be on the New York Stock Exchange?

"If Jeanette has anything to do with it, soon," says Thompson.

■ Carol Carson is a writer and Certified California State Master Naturalist.

Top: Lacey and Janeen Thompson (left to right), and Jeanette Fitzgearl, at their new Cutesy Cupcakes store in the Capitola Mall.

New clientele — shoppers from Aptos: Lyndsee Moran (left to right), Mateo, Santana and Raquel Riger pick the merchandise at Cutesy Cupcakes' new location in the Capitola Mall last Tuesday.



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