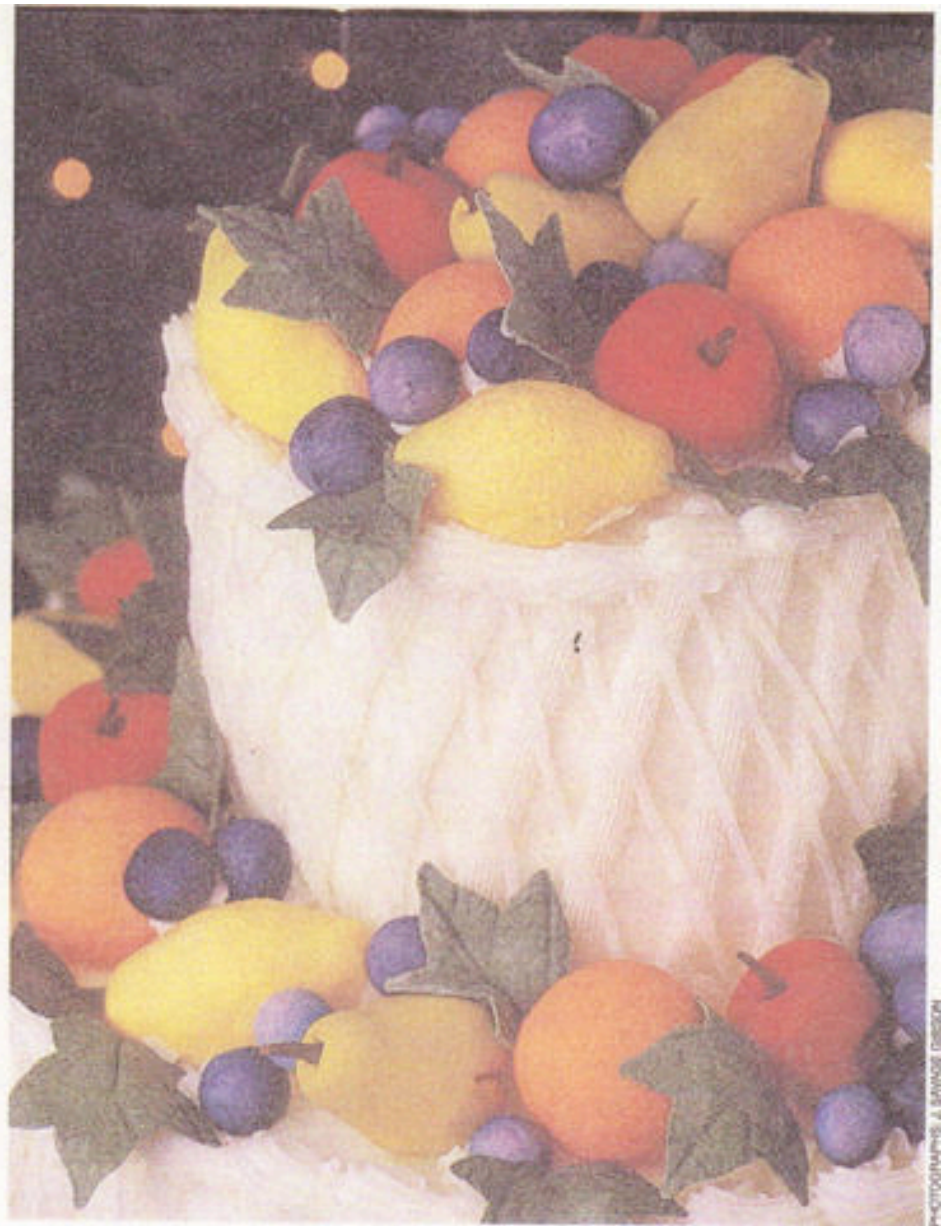




Cathy DuFault decided pastry would be her palette and cakes her canvas at her unique bakery.



PHOTOGRAPHS: J. BARWICK GIBSON

Incredible Edible Art

When Cathy DuFault first conceived of her specialty bakery, the only cake she'd made previously included using a box mix. "I had never baked—ever," emphasizes Cathy. Still she knew Edible Art of Charlotte would give her a creative outlet for her art training—and that the Queen City would not let the business fall flat.

She convinced her schoolteacher sister, Mary Jo Breckenridge, to join her. "We make a good whole brain," says Mary Jo with a laugh. "Cathy is the right brain, doing all the creative stuff, and I'm more the numbers part." The sisters worked side by side until Mary Jo's recent decision to return to

Every time she decorates an elaborate cake for Edible Art of Charlotte, Cathy utilizes her art training to create a masterpiece.

academia. However, she still serves as a business partner for Edible Art.

Prior to opening the bakery, a rather cake-clueless Cathy headed for Raleigh where she trained for five months with Judy Lasater, her aunt. Judy owns a similar operation in that city, and the sisters use Judy's recipes at their business.

"I had to learn everything—from how to order supplies and business cards to how to get a business license," Cathy says. As for the actual baking, Cathy's husband, David, a real estate attorney, discovered a knack for beating batter and would make all the cakes after putting in a full day at the office. Recently, baker Emily Porges replaced David, although he still steps in during busy times.

The bakery fits perfectly in historic Myers Park. "My parents live right here on Selwyn, so we knew it was a great location," says Cathy. Edible Art employs 15 people, but Cathy remains the primary creative engine, commanding cake decorating tubes with the same expertise other artists use to wield paintbrushes.

"It's all hand-drawn artwork or three-dimensional sculptures," says Cathy about her creations. The decorated pastries put the "Art" in Edible when Cathy designs the labor-intensive sugar paste accents.

The business provides cakes for weddings, birthdays, and special events. Edible Art also offers from-scratch brownies and cookies. On average, the bakery fills 110 cake orders per week and handles 10 to 15 weddings every weekend.

Individuals and corporate, civic, and church groups clamor for the goodies. Occasionally famous people drop in—the bakery created the nine-tier wedding cake for NASCAR driver Jeff Gordon and his bride. For one city celebration, the pastry artist depicted two downtown Charlotte streets with delicious detail. She also designed an incredible cake featuring a sculpted staircase and furniture pieces. Along with beautiful yet traditional cakes, Cathy creates what can only be called—no matter how you slice it—the unusual.

One wedding couple wanted a cake shaped like the Leaning Tower of Pisa; another served their guests a cake that looked like a Halloween house. A groom who hikes received a boot-shaped cake, while a physician husband-to-be requested one that resembled a brain. Cathy has





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Cathy DuFault

made cakes for a dog's birthday and a cat's baby shower. And she didn't bat an eye when a mom needed a cake that would feed 100 for her 1-year-old's birthday.

Awhile back, the Edible Art owner stopped inquiring about the reasons for specific design requests—even refraining from questioning a church that wanted a cake depicting two monkeys in a hot tub.

The one time Cathy poses a question, however, occurs when people call to ask if she makes "body parts."

"We do elbows and knees," she replies innocently. "What part did you have in mind?" The caller finally learns that, no, Edible Art declines to depict certain body parts—but only after Cathy thoroughly investigates the matter.

Sometimes you really can't have your cake and eat it too.

NANCY DORMAN-HICKSON



LET THEM EAT CAKE

Edible Art of Charlotte is located at 2908 Selwyn Avenue in Charlotte. Call (704) 342-2253, or visit www.edible-art-charlotte.com. For custom-made cakes, give as much advance notice as possible, especially during busy holiday seasons. Hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Saturday.

