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24 Hours – Calgary Edition

Cupcake queens get up close and personal

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TELEVISION

Cupcake queens get up close and personal

KATE SCHNAUBELT, 24 HOURS — On the surface, The Cupcake Girls appears to be just another behind-the-scenes television series about two friends running their Vancouver bakery.

Add in a dash of in vitro, a bestie with a bridezilla wedding gig who used to be a boy and you have a show chock-a-block with more than sugary treats.

"There's a personal struggle in every episode," Heather White says during a phone interview with 24 Hours.

White admits in the first episode of the show that she is a recovering alcoholic and her choice to include him in the show raised eyebrows from friends and family.

"They said, 'You brought this upon television?'" she smiles with a bit of a laugh.

Her business partner and best friend, Lori Joyce, is facing her own problem. She's having trouble getting pregnant. She says during the 12 episodes, viewers will watch her step-by-step process through in vitro fertilization.

While she was hesitant to talk about it on the show, Joyce says the producers convinced her to let them film it.

"There's a reason why this has happened," she says, adding she hopes her experience will help other women going through the same thing.

In the first episode, Joyce is brought to tears as she talks about her fertility issues.

"I want to be a mom. I want to have a family. And that's more important to me than dominating the world of cupcakes," she tells the camera, wondering if her cancer was the reason she can't get pregnant.

Joyce said the fact that the show is on W Network was another reason she was willing to reveal this very personal issue.

"W Network is all about inspiring women," she says. "We really revealed ourselves."

Along with watching the two friends, viewers are introduced to White's parents, who work for the two women, and a transitioning transgendered employee named Cadence.

Cadence is a fun-loving girl with bright blue eyes and blond hair who is confident in who she is, despite the questioning looks she often gets from customers. In the first episode, a little boy staring at her makes her feel awkward.

"He said something about me looking like a man," she says. "Which is, like, really going to happen, but it's like, no, I know I'm trying to work on it."

She says she's had other similar experiences, but she's used to the staring now.

"You've gotta be real tough to go through a lot of things that I go through, being a girl, to do what a girl gets to do."

Cadence is often getting in trouble, mostly for not wearing her hair net.

"There really is no hair for a reason," Cadence says in the first episode, pointing to the pink hair she pursues. "This is not it."

Joyce says in one episode, Cadence is forced to clean the toilets in the bakery as punishment. "She does it and it's very funny," Joyce says, adding Cadence wants to become "the Paris Hilton of transgendered people. That's her quote."

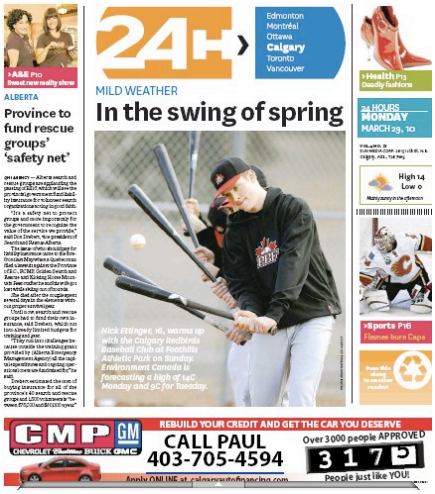
The two women, who grew up in Victoria, B.C., admit they had no business plan for Cupcakes when they started it in 2003 and they also had no idea how to bake when they opened their first shop. The idea struck them while they were living in New York City and were craving dessert.

"There was something whimsical and different about buying cupcakes," White said.

They were asked to do the show after filming an episode of *The Shopping Bags*, which they say received a "tremendous response." Despite feeling overwhelmed at times by having cameras follow their every move, the women appear to be good friends, claiming they're like sisters. They say they want to see how the show impacts their business, but, if asked to do a second season, "We would absolutely do it again," Joyce says.

The Cupcake Girls premieres with two episodes this Sunday on W Network.

Lori Joyce, left, and Heather White are best friends who went into the cupcake business together. Their new show Sunday on W Network follows them as they face both business and personal struggles.



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MILD WEATHER

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