

'The Cupcake Girls' "glad" they turned down TLC

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W reality show remains more than a cutesy 'Cake Boss'

The Cupcake Girls' third season comes fresh out of the oven tonight at 8 p.m ET/PT on W Network. But, had the show's stars and co-owners of the Vancouver-based cupcake chain, Cupcakes, not gone with their gut, the new set of episodes could easily have been debuting on TLC.

Before deciding to work alongside Force Square Productions and W Network on the show, best friends and business partners Lori Joyce and Heather White were courted by the network. As the girls explained to TV Guide Canada on the phone a few weeks back, TLC wanted a "cupcake shop version of Cake Boss." They wanted the construction drama and cake reveals that have become a staple of the hit show starring New Jersey native Buddy Valastro, but cuter and more colourful.

The Cupcake Girls does feature the occasional cake reveal (they batter up a 3D beluga whale cake, complete with a "working water spout," in Season 3). And Joyce and White certainly are colourful characters. But the pair does not bake and they were not willing to play pretend simply to please TLC.

"Heather and I are actual business people," Joyce says of herself and White, who leave the dirty, egg-breaking biz to their employees including head baker, Saskia. "We're not doing this show to be reality stars. We're doing this to promote our business and we want our show to project who we are."

The girls shot their entire first season before presenting it to TLC. The channel wasn't happy with the product, asking them to reshoot everything, with a few more pinches of artificial "drama" and a cup of on-camera icing. That's when White and Joyce walked away.

"We thought, 'There's so much good content here!'" White shares. "We ended up winning a Gemini for the first season so I'm glad we didn't go back on it."



TLC would go on to develop another cupcake shop show, DC Cupcakes. That popular program, which wrapped its second season in January, follows sister bakers Sophie LaMontagne and Katherine Kallinis and their Washington store, Georgetown Cupcake.

Joyce and White admit they have seen clips of DC Cupcakes “here and there.” When asked if they would be willing to duke it out with LaMontagne and Kallinis in an episode of Food Network’s popular baking competition show, Cupcake Wars, they seemed more than game.

“Yeah! Bring it!” White says excitedly at the suggestion. “We’d just bring Saskia with us and we’d win!”

The Girls have plenty to celebrate going in to Season 3. The new instalments document some “big changes” for Cupcakes, including new products (dog friendly and vegan cupcakes, for instance) and business strategies, as well as exciting developments in White and Joyce’s personal lives. (Weddings! Babies! Bif Naked befriending!)

“If you took all our cupcakes, all our products, and mashed them all together and put them in a blender, that’s what this season would be,” White explains. “Our cupcakes have totally evolved and so has the show.”

In Season 3, White and Joyce contemplate cutting ties temporarily so that one of them can relocate to Toronto and expand their brand. Cupcakes has a large Torontonion fan base, as evidenced in the season finale, which centres around the successful streetcar pop up shop White and Joyce opened in the city back one afternoon last November.

It’s unclear which of the Girls would make the big move. But that decision will most likely be the focus of Season 4. White and Joyce are shooting those episodes now, although the show’s future at W Network is “undetermined.”

“If you want to expand in the country and worldwide, you have to commit,” Joyce says. “Heather and I started this brand, so we’re really close with it and want to make sure it’s done properly.”

The Cupcake Girls returns Wednesday, April 4 at 8 p.m. ET/PT on W Network.