

## THE WINDSOR STAR

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### **Having their cupcakes and eating them too**

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April 1, 2010

Lori Joyce and Heather White, of Cupcakes stores, are stars of The Cupcake Girls on W Network. Photograph by: Handout photo

VANCOUVER -- Cupcakes, the store, was born in the most unlikely of circumstances. The dynamic duo who own the eponymous, expanding Vancouver business, Heather White and Lori Joyce, were in New York right after 9/11. As sales reps for an odour-control company in Vancouver, their work took them right to Ground Zero.

The pair, friends from their teen years, went to a famous bakery (Magnolia Bakery) for a pick-me-up. They bought four cupcakes, ate some in a cab, and smiles returned to their faces.

"This is what we should do," White decided, upon seeing what cupcakes can do. "Open a cupcake store back in Vancouver." Joyce says White is the creative visionary of the pair, and admits she didn't get it right away.

Now they operate three Cupcakes stores and have three franchised stores in Metro Vancouver. Plans are to take the franchise across Canada.

And Sunday, a reality-TV series, The Cupcake Girls, premieres on W Network. It was to be a show about them expanding their cupcake business. But the producers were in for a nice surprise. Cupcakes turned out to be a business with a colourful cast of characters, issues and relationships.

"We jumped on the growing cupcake trend early last summer when shooting started on this series, and now, as the series is about to hit the air, not only has Heather and Lori's business expanded, but cupcakes are popping up everywhere," says Vibika Bianchi, director of original products at W Network. "As simple and sweet as cupcakes may seem, our audience will be amazed by the behind-the-scenes drama and comedy that goes on in Lori and Heather's cupcake world over the 13 episodes of this series."

White and Joyce are human whirlwinds threatening to break into tornadoes. In the first episode, we meet Joyce rushing for an in-vitro fertilization appointment. At the clinic, she's told there's nothing medically wrong with her and that she has to have less stress in her life. (Ha!)

White, a recovered alcoholic, unhappily drops an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting to deliver cupcakes for a boat party that will set sail without dessert if she doesn't do it; her father, the actual delivery guy in a cupcake-pink van, is refusing to fight the snarly traffic to jump into the delivery fray, which includes two wedding cakes, one for a very important client. Dad's stopped for a burger somewhere, while White and Joyce race around. Her mother, who works in the office, is the sapper, defusing emotional landmines.



At one of the Cupcake stores, we meet Cadence, one of the frontline sales team, a transitioning transgender woman with a neon personality. She's saving up money for a sex-change operation.

In an interview, Joyce talked about their naive leap into business. "Neither of us baked. We were 27, we didn't have a business plan, we knew nothing about it and ignored the three rules of business: Don't do it with a best friend. Don't go into it without a business plan. Don't do something you know nothing about."

They opened their first store in 2002, and say they were the first branded cupcake store that just sold cupcakes. Now there are around 100 in North America. "There are tons," Joyce says.

"We've been through times when we've hated each other and it would have been so easy for one of us to walk, but the fact that we didn't, and overcame conflicts, is what made us so much stronger. I'm actually on my second marriage. I married Heather first. It was like a preparation for my next marriage. Even if this ended tomorrow, what I'd take from it is what I've learned about relationships and managing. But it's amazing when you stick through it."

Catching up with the pair as they landed at Pearson International Airport in Toronto last Wednesday, the pair had TV, print and blog interviews ahead of them.

But they'll be back home and in front of their TVs on Sunday for the first two episodes of The Cupcake Girls at 9 p.m. And Joyce, by the way, is pregnant.

The Cupcake Girls premieres Sunday, April 4 at 9 ET on W Network.

## RECIPES

The following cupcake recipes are from Martha Stewart's Cupcakes. If you need a long lie-down before you get to the icing part, these cupcakes can be stored overnight or frozen for up to 2 months in the freezer in airtight containers until you're back in fighting form.

### Easter-Egg Cupcakes

You want to keep the colours for the icing in pastel shades for Easter, so add the gel colours one drop at a time and mix before adding more

Makes 16.

1 1/2 cups (375 mL) all-purpose flour

3/4 cup (175 mL) unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder

1 1/2 cups (375 mL) sugar

1 1/2 teaspoons (22 mL) baking soda

3/4 teaspoon (4 mL) baking powder

3/4 teaspoon (4 mL) salt

2 large eggs

3/4 cup (175 mL) buttermilk

3 tablespoons (45 mL) vegetable oil

1 teaspoon (5 mL) pure vanilla extract

3/4 cup (175 mL) warm water

Royal Icing (see recipe)

Pink, lavender and yellow gel-paste food colours

Preheat oven to 350 F (170 C). Line standard muffin tins with paper liners. With an electric mixer on medium speed, whisk together flour, cocoa, sugar, baking soda, baking powder and salt. Reduce speed to low. Add eggs, buttermilk, oil, extract, and the water; beat until smooth and combined, scraping down sides of bowl as needed.

Divide batter evenly among lined cups, filling each about two-thirds full. Bake, rotating tins halfway through, until a cake tester inserted in centres comes out clean, about 20 minutes. Transfer tins to wire racks to cool 10 minutes; turn out cupcakes onto racks and let cool completely.

With serrated knife, trim top of each cupcake to make level. Divide royal icing among bowls; tint each portion a different colour. Transfer into paper cornets to draw lines.

For drawn lines, outline the top of a cupcake with one colour of icing, then pipe more icing to flood or fill in the inside. Working quickly, pipe four to five parallel lines with one or two different colours of icing over the first colour. Use a toothpick to draw lines perpendicular to the piped ones, alternating between dragging downward and upward.

For swirled effect, outline cupcake with one colour and pipe squiggly lines inside the outline. Working quickly, fill in spaces with another colour of icing to cover completely; use a toothpick to swirl the colours.

Allow icing to set, about 30 minutes. Iced cupcakes can be stored up to 1 day at room temperature in airtight containers. Do not refrigerate.

Royal Icing for Easter-Egg Cupcakes

1 pound (4 cups/1 litre) confectioners' sugar, sifted

1/4 cup (50 mL) plus 1 tablespoon (15 mL) meringue powder

Scant 1/2 cup (125 mL) water, plus more as needed

With electric mixer on low speed, beat all ingredients until smooth, about 7 minutes. If icing is too thick, add more water a little at a time, beating until icing holds a ribbon on the surface for a few seconds when beater is lifted. If too thin, continue mixing 2 to 3 minutes more.

## Coconut Cupcakes

Makes about 20.

1 3/4 cups (425 mL) all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons (10 mL) baking powder

1/2 teaspoon (2 mL) salt

1/2 cup (125 mL) packed sweetened shredded coconut

3/4 cup (175 mL) unsalted butter, room temperature

1 1/3 (325 mL) cups sugar

2 large whole eggs, plus 2 egg whites, room temperature

1 1/2 teaspoons (7 mL) pure vanilla extract

3/4 cup (175 mL) unsweetened coconut milk

Seven-Minute Frosting (see recipe)

1 1/3 cups (325 mL) unsweetened flaked coconut for garnish (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 F (170 C). Line standard muffin tins with paper liners. Whisk together flour, baking powder and salt. Pulse shredded coconut in a food processor until finely ground and whisk into flour mixture.

With an electric mixer on medium-high speed, cream butter and sugar until pale and fluffy. Gradually beat in whole eggs, whites, and vanilla, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. Reduce speed to low. Add flour mixture in three batches, alternating with two additions of coconut milk, and beating until combined after each.

Divide the batter evenly among lined cups, filling each three-quarters full. Bake, rotating tins halfway through, until a cake tester inserted in centres comes out clean, about 20 minutes. Remove from oven; turn out cupcakes onto wire racks and let cool completely.

To finish, use a small offset spatula to spread a generous dome of frosting onto each cupcake, and, if desired, garnish with flaked coconut (pressing gently to adhere). Cupcakes are best eaten the day they're frosted; store at room temperature until ready to serve.

### Seven-Minute Frosting for Coconut Cupcakes

1 1/2 cups (375 mL) plus 2 tablespoons (30 mL) sugar

2/3 cup (150 mL) water

2 tablespoons (30 mL) light corn syrup

6 large egg whites, room temperature

Combine 1 1/2 cups (375 mL) sugar with the water and corn syrup in a small saucepan; clip a candy thermometer to side of pan. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring occasionally until sugar dissolves. Continue boiling without stirring until syrup reaches 230 F (110 C).

Meanwhile, in the bowl of a standing electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, whisk egg whites on medium-high speed until soft peaks form. With mixer running, add remaining 2 tablespoons (30 mL) sugar, beating to combine.

As soon as sugar syrup reaches 230 F (110 C), remove from heat. With mixer on medium-low speed pour syrup down side of bowl in a slow, steady stream. Raise speed to medium-high; whisk until mixture is completely cool (test by touching the bottom of the bowl) and stiff (but not dry) peaks form, about 7 minutes. Use immediately. As an option, you can add 1/2 a teaspoon of pure coconut extract at the end, mixing it in.

### Stout Cupcakes

Makes about 28.

If you're a studly male boycotting girly cupcakes, this one's for you.

3 3/4 cups (2 litres) all-purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon (2 mL) plus 1/8 teaspoon (0.5 mL) baking soda

1 3/4 teaspoons (8.5 mL) baking powder

1 1/4 teaspoons (6 mL) salt

1 tablespoon (15 mL) ground cinnamon

1 1/4 teaspoons (6 mL) freshly grated nutmeg

1 1/4 cups (300 mL) vegetable oil

1 1/4 cups (300 mL) unsulphured molasses

1/2 cup (125 mL) plus 1 tablespoon (15 mL) packed light brown sugar



2 large eggs, plus 1 egg yolk

1 tablespoon (15 mL) plus 1 teaspoon (5 mL) finely grated orange zest

1/4 cup (10 ounces/50 mL) stout beer, such as Guinness, poured and settled

Stout Glaze (see recipe)

Preheat oven to 350 F (170 C). Line standard muffin tins with paper liners. Whisk together flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg.

With an electric mixer on medium-low speed, beat oil, molasses, brown sugar, whole eggs, yolk, zest and stout until combined. Reduce speed to low. Gradually add flour mixture, beating until just combined.

Divide batter evenly among lined cups, filling each three-quarters full. Bake, rotating tins halfway through, until a cake tester, inserted in centres comes out clean, about 20 minutes. Turn out cupcakes onto wire racks to cool completely.

To finish, place cupcakes on a wire rack set over a baking sheet; spoon glaze over cupcakes and let set. Cupcakes are best eaten the day they are glazed; keep at room temperature until ready to serve.

Stout Glaze

2 cups (500 mL) confectioners' sugar, sifted

1/4 cup (50 mL) stout beer, such as Guinness, poured and settled

Whisk together ingredients until combined. Use immediately.