

Eugene patisserie offers specialty nuptial cake

■ The cake shop adds real flower decorations to wedding cakes and can accommodate special diets

By Gabe V. Kjos
for the Emerald

When Jennifer Wassermiller got married, she turned to her friend Catherine Reinhart, who was running a bakery out of her garage with her sister Cheryl, to make her the perfect cake.

"It was a simple cake, but beautiful. It was a dark chocolate three-layer cake with gold leaves on the side," Wassermiller said.

She was the first person to order a wedding cake from the Sweet Life Patisserie, and she hasn't forgotten the experience.

"When you order a cake from Sweet Life, it is the beginning of a lifelong relationship. It's a combination of love and artistry instead of moneymaking," she said.

The bakery moved from Catherine and Cheryl Reinhart's garage in 1997 to its current location at 755 Monroe St. It now makes approximately 150 to 200 custom wedding cakes a year, Catherine Reinhart said, but without the creativity of both sisters and a trip to a bridal show, their wedding cake operation might never have come into existence.

"We went to a bridal show, and to prepare we did a bunch of demo Styrofoam cakes," Reinhart said. "We covered the cakes with real frosting and real flowers. People just flipped, and they said, 'We have to have you do our wedding cake.'"

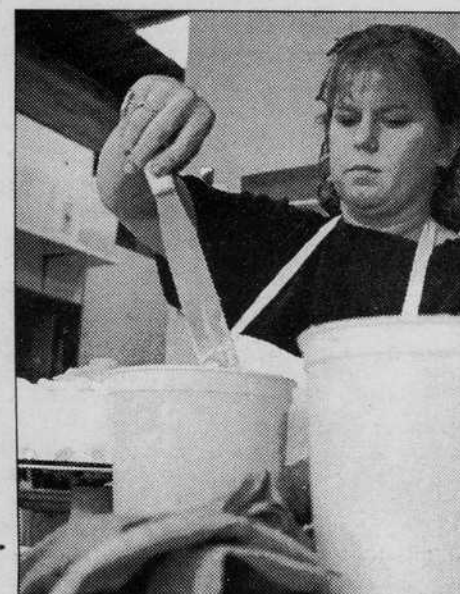
The bakery offers many varieties of wedding cakes. They range from a two-tier that can serve 30 people to a five-tier that can serve 300. According to Reinhart, the average cake people purchase is a three-tier that serves 100 people.

Sweet Life's services include consultations, cake samples, cake pillars, fresh flowers on the cake, and delivery and set-up in the Eugene and Springfield area.

There are also many different cake styles available, but there isn't a typical cake that everyone orders.

"So many people get so many different designs — there are about 400 pictures in (the album) and we have about 100 more in the back, and they are all different," Reinhart said. "Each one is different because of the flowers they want on it or the way it is set up."

Another option the bakery offers is vegan wedding cakes and cakes for people who are lactose intolerant. Reinhart said the bakery began considering the idea one day when a customer asked for a cake without eggs. It was tough for the bakery to make vegan cakes because of the lack of cookbooks with vegan recipes in them, she said.



Photos by Jonathan House Emerald

The Sweet Life Patisserie offers a wide array of wedding cakes, including the one shown (upper left), which contain a thoughtful helping of sweet messages. Cake decorator "Q" Regan whips up frosting (below right) during preparations for another cake, and later adds a real flower as a finishing touch (upper right). The bakery, located at 755 Monroe St., also features a large selection of vegan cakes and pastries.

Then, "someone gave us a chocolate cake recipe that was (vegan); we started to experiment with it more, and it turned out that everyone liked it," Reinhart said.

Because of the many different varieties of wedding cakes available, Reinhart recommends people receive a consultation at the bakery to decide what kind of cake they want. She also suggests that if people are planning a summer wedding, which is typical, they should consult Sweet Life in January or February be-

cause cake decorators get swamped in the summer months. If they are planning for a wedding that is not in the peak of summer, they should schedule a consultation a month or two in advance.

The bakery creates many delicacies other than wedding cakes, such as parfaits and the Chocolate Orgasm Pave.

Reinhart strives to make everyone happy, no matter what they order. She always hears great things about the bakery, she said, but even on occasions when people

don't get quite what they expect, they say they will be back.

"Even the customers who complain are so happy," Reinhart said.

"It is rare for someone to be less than delighted," cake decorator QLara "Q" Regan said. "The best thing about our cakes is that they are as delicious inside as they are beautiful on the outside."

Gabe V. Kjos is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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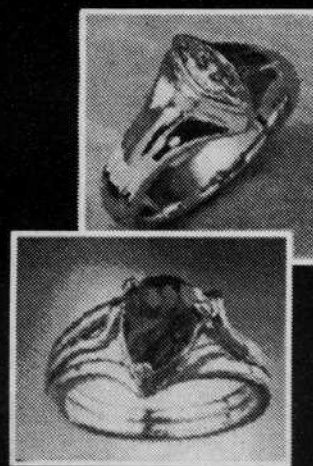
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