

To Bake Is Human; To Cupcake, Divine

THE DIVINE CUPCAKE'S NEW OWNERS CARRY ON A SWEET TRADITION By Andy Valentine

When Aaron and Mariah Kastrava acquired The Divine Cupcake in early May, they were ready for a challenge. Previously, the married couple had planned to open a coffee house, but when an opportunity for something sweeter arrived, they went all in.

After closing its store in west Eugene in 2012, The Divine Cupcake (which existed for nine years under previous ownership) operated principally as an online business, and the Kastravas understood this going in.

What they didn't anticipate was that, following appearances at several local events (including this year's Oregon Country Fair), demand for their bouncy, vegan delicacies would skyrocket.

Three months later, they were cutting the ribbon on a new retail shop in Springfield.

"We had to get the storefront because it was way too busy," says Mariah Kastrava, who graduated from the University of Oregon earlier this year. "We had too many orders to be running out of our kitchen — my kitchen was a disaster *all the time*."

It's exciting news for any entrepreneur. But let's step back to the part that made this bakery famous: The Divine Cupcake serves, and has always served, primarily vegan fare. For those born under rocks (or slabs of beef) this means its cupcakes contain zero animal products.

Wait, how does one bake a cupcake without eggs, milk and butter? Answer: Who cares? Truth is, you'd never know the difference.

"We didn't [stay vegan] because Divine Cupcake did it before us," Mariah Kastrava explains. "We kept it this way because it's so freaking good."

Picture, if you will, languid crests of lavender frosting, ooey-goey splots of choco-filled fantasy, Oregon blueberries turgid with juice. Now team those with the smoothest, bounciest, brightest cupcakes you can imagine. If that doesn't do it for you, make an appointment with a taste specialist.



MARIAH KASTRAVA FROSTS MINI CUPCAKES

PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

Vegan shtick aside, the new owners are following other traditions that made Divine Cupcake great. All their ingredients are locally sourced, organic, fair-trade, non-GMO, gluten-conscious, etc.

As Creswell natives, the Kastravas say they hold Northwest values in high regard, and supporting local business is a big part of that.

Aaron Kastrava explains that most of their ingredients come from locally owned stores, including Friendly St. Market, as well as farms like Royal Blue and GloryBee (yes, they are well aware that honey isn't vegan; they have standard cupcakes, too). Even the syrups for their specialty drinks are

bought in Portland, and they only serve Café Mam coffee.

It's all about keeping quality high. As for the future, the Kastravas say they hope to continue their rate of growth and allow the business to move organically. So far, they're on the right track.

As Mariah Kastrava puts it, they want to expand and do new things. At the same time, though, they're keeping the values that birthed Divine Cupcake intact. For that, we salute them. ■

The Divine Cupcake is located at 388 Q Street in Springfield and is open 10 am to 8 pm Monday through Thursday, 10 am to 9 pm Friday and Saturday and 10 am to 7 pm Sunday. For more information on custom orders and event catering, visit divinecupcake.com.

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