

Food

Dufflet marks
30 years of
sweet success

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Dish

A plan is percolating in my brain: how to infiltrate the staff lunch room at Dufflet Pastries, Toronto's famous baking emporium.

My reason: the brimming bowl of cake trimmings (a mouth-watering melee of shapes, colours and flavours with gooey icings attached) perched daily on a shelf in that space used by employees during breaks.

I grab a couple of the luscious rejects and nibble on them as I follow Dufflet Rosenberg, this thriving business's diminutive owner, into the big, bright bakery in our city's west end.

I'm here to talk cake, cookies, cupcakes, pies, bars and tortes, to see pastry production in full swing and to reminisce about this banner year: Dufflet Pastries' 30th anniversary.

We make our way through the sweet-smelling hub of activity.

There are cakes being dipped, swirled and dripped in and out of huge bowls of shiny chocolate ganache. Nearby are vats of cooked carrot chunks for carrot cake, one of the bakery's bestselling items. "It's a trick of ours," Rosenberg confides.

Two workers twist strips of chocolate plastic into ruffles to crown a slew of dainty Baby Truffle Cakes. Some whip up a huge batch of buttercream. Others pat a crumbly butter dough for date squares into giant pans.

Upstairs, Rosenberg's office is lined with baking books and assorted dessert magazines dating back 30 years. We sit and chat.

She began her confectionery career in 1975, baking and selling about 10 cakes a week from home. There were three kinds: chocolate, apple and cheesecake. Versions of the three are still among her most popular offerings.



She peddled her wares to the long-defunct Cow Café on Dupont St. near Howland Ave. "It was a funny little vegetarian café," she recalls. "It was hippy-dippy, from Moosewood cookbooks, with some creativity."

Rosenberg, 50, hit the big time when the late Just Desserts opened on Davenport Rd. in 1978. "For 10 years, we were their chief supplier," she says, noting how innovative the place was for its time. "It was fun."

Clever creations such as Chocolate Almond Cake with condensed milk buttercream wrapped in a Nutella-style paste were quickly making her a culinary star. Staples like Sour Cream Coffee Cake, Chocolate Fudge Cake and Toasted Almond Meringue were early hits.

In 1980, Dufflet Pastries moved into baking premises at 787 Queen St. W. Two years later, the lively storefront opened there. Today, Rosenberg employs 100 people and makes more than 100 products. That's thousands of cakes a day sold to about 500 places in Ontario.

"I've always liked sweets," this soft-spoken powerhouse of a woman says. "I always have dessert. I don't skip a day."

I ask about her favourite. "Today, it's the Double Vanilla Cupcake," is the quick reply. In the name of research, I try one. Still half-frozen, this cute confection is sheer retro deliciousness.

On my way out, I pass by the trimmings bowl and leave sweetly content.

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