

Sugar and spice and everything nice

Let the holiday treat decorating begin

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STAFF WRITER

With Thanksgiving Day just a week away, countless bakers are already pulling their holiday recipes from the shelves. Sleeves are being rolled up, dough is being rolled out, and mouths are salivating at the thought of the fresh-baked goodies soon to come.

Kate Tierney is one of those made-from-scratch kind of girls.

"We've always made cakes for the kids' birthdays and Valentines treats for school," she noted.

Now Tierney, a stay-at-home mom with four little children, is hoping to help encourage others to bake from scratch. Tierney is the only active Twin Cities consultant for Cake 'n Crumbs, a direct party sales company that specializes in cake, cookie and candy decorating.

With the holidays approaching, Tierney is hoping to get her fledgling business off the ground and have fun.

"I was looking for something to do that got me out of the house every so often," she said. "I already do a lot of volunteering so I thought, 'Why don't I work at something I enjoy and can make some money with at the same time?'"

In her first free class, Tierney demonstrated cake decorating techniques to a group with varied experience in cake decorating. Participants ranged in ability from a former TCBY employee to a woman who admitted to having more than her fair share of problems with cake decorating.

"We've got a good mix," said Tierney.

Tierney showed all of them that they could create professional-looking goodies with their own two hands. The basis of Tierney's business is creating a hands-on experience that gets people excited to create.

She shared a number of tips from how to thin thick icing (add milk) to which food coloring is best (gel is better than liquid for color and consistency) to the best hand position for decorating with a pastry bag.

Participants were noticeably impressed with their own newly-acquired skills.

"It's way easier when you have the right tools," said one woman.

"This is fun," said another.

Tierney hopes to be able to do more than just sell Cake 'n Crumbs products to people. She also hopes to do parties and classes where people get a chance to roll up their sleeves and try their hand at various techniques.



Elizabeth Treat practices making decorative stars on a plastic placemat before starting on her cupcake.

"The guests leave with something they've created," noted Tierney. "Having fun and learning a new skill in the process."

It was clear that Tierney's first guests were pleased with the process as they devoured vanilla and chocolate cupcakes topped with their own decorative touches.

"Pretty, aren't they?" she noted, admiring her students' work with a smile.

To contact Tierney, call (952) 261-9489 or e-mail katie@thetierneys.com.



Kate Tierney demonstrates hand positions for creating different effects with a pastry bag during her cake decorating class.

Baking tips

Cake Tips:

- Use pan goop whenever you bake a cake to ensure an easy release from the pan. Pan goop is equal parts flour, vegetable oil, and vegetable shortening. Just beat them together, store in an airtight container, and use a pastry brush to apply to your pans.
- Make sure that a cake has completely cooled before icing it. If a cake is too warm, the icing will melt and run.
- Slip strips of waxed paper under the edges of a cake before you decorate it. When you're done, pull the paper out, and your plate is clean.

Candy Tips:

- Use cotton gloves when handling finished chocolate candies so that you don't leave fingerprints on the chocolate.
- When filling chocolate molds, fill halfway, then tap the mold on a flat surface to distribute the chocolate and release any bubbles. Then fill the rest of the mold and tap again to smooth the back of the chocolate and release the rest of the bubbles.
- When making chocolate lollipops, place the stick in the candy before completely filling the mold. This ensures that the stick is positioned properly and decreases the chances of the candy breaking off.

Cookie Tips:

- Dust cookie cutters with flour before cutting the dough to help eliminate sticking.
- To keep your rolled dough at a uniform thickness, place rubber bands on both sides of the rolling pin to the thickness you desire. Make sure not to roll the bands through the dough, though — it will cut it in half.
- Roll cookie dough between two pieces of waxed paper or parchment to cut down on sticking to the rolling pin and the countertop.

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