

PLAY WITH YOUR FOOD

Have fun learning how to create edible works of art with the help of Cake 'n Crumbs

By Heather Dorsey
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There are a lot of ways to describe Lori Sprenger's business, Cake 'n Crumbs, and the home parties that it entails. But do Sprenger a favor: Don't describe them as being like Tupperware parties: "It makes me cringe, because we are so not remotely a Tupperware party."

Not that Sprenger has anything against Tupperware and she understands that people use that label because they are a direct-home party business, but she makes the distinction that they are not just hosting a demonstration: "We are hands-on, we are playing together." Or, more specifically, she says, "We play with chocolate, cookie dough, or frosting; and anyone who you invite to your home plays with us."

Sprenger started Cake 'n Crumbs 11 years ago, when she was working as a nurse full-time. What started out as an interest in learning how to decorate a cake for her son's 3rd birthday resulted in her wanting to find a way to help other moms learn the same skills without having to spend a lot of time and money taking a class.

A single mom, Sprenger says it wasn't easy being a single parent, working full-time as a nurse and running a business: "Somehow you get the energy that you need. We've had steady growth and it's come from a higher power, I always say that this company is God-driven".

"We are just starting to do advertising. People just find us, and the company is just taking itself to the next level. We have

two Instructors in New York that just found us."

What is helping the company grow from word of mouth, is most likely the delicious edibles that people are making and tasting at their home parties and the fun they have doing it: "We are way fun! The parties are hands-on and informative. There's an old Chinese proverb that I frequently quote to customers who are thinking about having a class: 'Tell me I forget, show me I remember, involve me, I understand.'"

Cake 'n Crumbs offers over 30 different classes to choose from including: cake decorating, cake stenciling, chocolate pencil toppers, cookie bouquets and shortbread spoons, just to name a handful. They come into your home, at no charge, and take you from start to finish through a creation.

"The difference between us and some of the other home party businesses is that our classes are never the same, unless you choose to have them be the same. The others may use the same tools, but just make something different. With us if you've been to a cake decorating class, you'll want to go to a chocolate molding class, so that you can use them on your cake. All of our classes intertwine."

Mequon mom, Tina Meskimen has taken a number of classes over the years and is scheduled to host one in June: "It's going to be a cookie icing class because my daughter asked about it. She started getting into my Cake 'n Crumbs supplies."



It started with decorating a cake for her son's third birthday, and now Lori Sprenger's Cake 'n Crumbs business is really taking off.

Caramel Bars

1 box German chocolate cake mix
3/4 cup melted butter
1/3 cup evaporated milk
1 cup chopped nuts

1 (16 oz.) pkg. Kraft caramel bites (may be purchased under edibles)
1/3 cup evaporated milk
6 oz. pkg. chocolate chips

Preheat oven at 350 degrees. In the top of a double boiler melt caramel bits with 1/3 cup evaporated milk. In a large mixing bowl, combine cake mix, melted butter, 1/3 cup evaporated milk and nuts. Press half into greased 9 x 13 inch pan. Bake 8 minutes at 350 degrees. Remove from the oven and sprinkle with the chocolate chips. Spread melted caramel mixture over the chips. Using your fingers, top with the remaining cake mixture. Overlap batter to cover most of the caramel, allowing some to show through. Bake 15-18 minutes at 350 degrees. Cool completely before cutting. Enjoy! This recipe will be asked for time and time again!

Yields approximately 20-25 bars.



Pistachio Bread

1 pkg. Butter Recipe Gold cake mix
1 sm. Pkg. instant pistachio pudding
4 large eggs, beaten
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1/4 cup water
1 cup sour cream
1/4 plus 1 1/2 tsp. sugar
1 Tbls. plus 1 1/2 tsp cinnamon
Emerald green gel (optional)

Preheat oven at 345 degrees. Lightly spray 5 small loaf pans with non-stick cooking spray. In a large mixing bowl combine the cake mix, instant pudding mix, beaten eggs, vegetable oil, water and sour cream. Blend well. (add emerald green gel for a bolder color if desired.) In our stainless steel shaker, mix the sugar and cinnamon, combining thoroughly. Spoon half the bread batter into the loaf pans. Top with the remaining bread batter. Do not fill more than 2/3 full or they will overflow while baking. Divide the remaining sugar over the loaves. Bake at 345 degrees for 45 minutes, or until tester comes out clean. Place foil on an opposite rack below the loaves to catch spills. Cool in the loaf pans for 10 minutes then remove to a wire rack to cool completely.

The daughter in question, one of three children, is eight years old. "This is really simple stuff that you can do and my kids love it too. You take this stuff to school and everybody makes a big deal about it and assumes that you spent so much time on it, and the kids can say they made it themselves," Meskimen says.

Meskimen says that there are often people who are tentative at first about jumping in and learning how to make the goodies, but says, "If I can do it, anyone can. I've never been really crafty in the kitchen; I'm crafty in other areas. I'm the one who has been notorious for burning stuff. I have never been much of a baker and I really don't have much of a sweet tooth; but there is such a need for this stuff."

Meskimen says she liked the idea of the company so much that she joined the company as office manager, a position that she works out of her home.

Sprenger says, "I am a firm believer that direct sales is a

good opportunity for single moms. If you know your child is being taken care of on Wednesday nights, for example, then you could hold classes on Wednesday nights. It's a fabulous opportunity."

Visit the company's website for the benefits of becoming an instructor, including: setting your own hours, working as much as you want, flexibility and unlimited earning possibilities. They offer free training and a support network and, "to put the icing on the cake we offer our best-selling instructors personal monthly incentives." Pretty sure, that pun was intended.

Sprenger says Cake 'n Crumbs is also community-friendly, offering classes to help scouts meet their merit badge requirements. There is a fee for this class as well as the birthday parties they host. To get a complete listing of the classes they offer, or for more information about the company visit their website at

www.cakencrums.com or contact Lori Sprenger at (262) 241-5220



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