

Poppin' Up Fresh

Have you sampled the new micropatisseries in the city? We can help.

BY JONATHAN KAUFFMAN

Not so long ago, to open a pastry shop represented the consummation of decades' worth of training and the consumption of enough funds to run a mayoral campaign. Required: an industrial kitchen with the capacity to bake enough pains au chocolat for the French parliament. A national reputation helped.

The majority of the European-style baked goods in the city came from industrial-scale bakeries and a few high-end pastry shops such as Citizen Cake, Tartine, and Delessio. The cupcake trend was threatening to blanket the city in drifts of pink frosting, but by this January, it had crested. Cupcakes aren't going away — Union Street is now officially Sprinkle Row — but a very different type of pastry shop has taken off. Call it the micropatisserie.

Over the past 18 months, a dozen tiny retail bakeries have sprung up around town. The new micropatisseries range from the minuscule (downtown kiosks) to the merely small (with the capacity to supply bread to restaurants or ceiling-high wedding cakes).

Case in point: **Batter Bakery** (kiosk at 555 California at Kearny, 706-8076, www.batterbakery.com). Owner Jen Musty had been an accountant who baked for the same reason some people knit socks or train for triathlons. In 2008, she quit her day job and rented space in a commercial kitchen. A year ago, she passed a vacant flower-seller's stand on the Bank of America plaza and immediately knew that was where she wanted to be. Now a single employee staffs the cylindrical, clear-walled stand, selling scones and tea breads in the morning and cookies through the afternoon (highlights: mint chocolate cookies, orange-pistachio shortbread, the toffeelike sand angel).

"I was daunted by the thought of opening a business in San Francisco," Musty says. "I thought only those top-tier pastry chefs could make it. But people here are eager to embrace small businesses." And while the kiosk has boosted her catering and wholesale sales, she has no plans to leave the kiosk. "As much as I would love to have a storefront in a high-traffic neighborhood," she says, "when you're selling \$2 to \$3 snacks and the rent is \$8,000 a month ... I don't think so."

Remi Hayashi, owner of **Goody Goodie** (1246 Folsom at Eighth St., 317-3013, www.goodygoodie.com, Wed.-Sat. 10 a.m.-2 p.m.) has much the same perspective. She went through culinary school and started in the pastry department of Stars in the mid-1990s, working under Emily Luchetti. After a dozen years, she left the restaurant world to raise a family, but eventually wanted back in. Instead of returning to restaurants, several months ago she opened a window stand on Folsom, no bigger than a walk-in closet; her production kitchen is a few doors



Kimberly Sandie

Raspberry pound cake from Pinkie's: An all-American treat like Granny used to make.

down. "I just wanted to concentrate on the smaller scale of things," Hayashi says. "I wanted to be as passionate as I was in the restaurant, but without the madness."

Right now she sells six cookies (highlight: the circus cookie, with chocolate chips and caramel corn), as well as a few more adult snacks, including a Black Forest whoopie pie and a chocolate-black olive wafer that flickers between savory and sweet. Hayashi sells all of her cookies in \$1 bite sizes as well as larger ones, and thinks that the recession is largely to credit for the growth of micropatisseries like hers. "We spend money on those little things to make us feel better," she suggests. "Instead of going out for lunch or dinner, you're going to let yourself have that \$2-\$3 latte and a small sweet."

One of the factors that is making such minuscule retail businesses possible is that, unlike restaurants, bakers have two additional income streams: wholesale and catering. Hayashi, for example, sells to a handful of cafes. Musty estimates half of her business is wholesale and catering.

Mutsumi Takehara, owner of the 9-month-old **Sandbox Bakery** (833 Cortland

Eat

at Gates, 642-8580, www.sandboxbakerysf.com), originally intended the 800-square-foot retail shop she built in the front of her kitchen as a place to sell "fun stuff" while she focused on her wholesale business — croissants, muffins, and breakfast pastries. But her bakery, which sells gorgeous Japanese challah-dough-based pastries (highlights: negi-miso knots, yuzu marmalade with sage) and bento boxes in addition to pitch-perfect croissants and scones (highlight: cherry-almond), has become a neighborhood touchstone. A destination, in fact.

A number of the micro pastry shops are working in tandem with restaurants. Lori Baker recently opened a retail bakery on the Bush Street side of the 10-month-old **Baker & Banker** (1701 Octavia at Bush, 351-2500, www.bakerandbanker.com), which she owns with her husband. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, the small outlet — one pastry case, one bread rack, one espresso machine — is filled with display cakes baked in the massive production kitchen in the basement, as well as a dozen or so American-style pastries (highlights: blueberry cream cheese muffin, peanut-butter cookie, fluffernutter cupcake).

For the past six months, Shauna Des Voignes, who last worked at RN74 and Ubuntu, runs **Knead Patisserie** (3111 24th St. at Folsom, 655-3024, Twitter: @knead-patisserie) in the back of Local: Mission Eatery. She bakes the state's most opulent brioche for one of Local: Mission's lunchtime sandwiches and preps desserts for the chef — her husband, Jake — to serve at dinner. Des Voignes says, of the shift from RN74 to a tiny shop, "Because it's a small place, we're able to do an evolving menu, and can stay local and seasonal. I'm not just making cupcakes." She erects a stand out front of the restaurant in the morning (highlights: meat pies with puff-pastry crusts, hazelnut whole-wheat scone), and then moves to the back, where she sets out cookies, pound cakes, and pastries (highlight: a custard-filled pastry circle with a caramelized-sugar top).

If there's one pastry chef who embodies this entire movement, it's Cheryl Burr, owner of **Pinkie's Bakery** (1196 Folsom at Eighth St., 556-4900, www.pinkiesbakerysf.com). Burr was the long-time pastry chef at Bacar, but by 2008, she was ready to show off her

"Because it's a small place, we're able to do an evolving menu, and can stay local and seasonal." — Shauna Des Voignes of Knead

own style. She started baking artisan breads at a production kitchen on De Haro, then began selling goods out of one of the windows. After she and her friend Chris Beerman lost their lease in April, the two found adjoining spaces in SOMA. Pinkie's Bakery opened May 1. Burr now has seven employees, more than a dozen wholesale clients for her bread, a single pastry case packed with pastries and lunchtime sandwiches — and she provides desserts to Beerman's new restaurant, Citizen's Band. Her strengths, in addition to her rustic levain, are her caramelized onion and gruyere brioche and her all-American sweets: cinnamon rolls, miniature pound cakes.

"When I first decided to open my own place in 2008, the pastry scene was dominated by Frenchies, but that market is saturated," she says. "What has been popular for us has been comfort foods, things that remind you of what your mom or grandmother makes. I would never put out anything that I wouldn't want to eat while watching an entire season of *Nip/Tuck*."

Other micropatisseries: **Anthony's Cookies** (1417 Valencia at 25th St., 655-9834, www.anthonyscookies.com). **Delise Desert Cafe** (327 Bay at Mason, 399-9694, www.delisesf.com). **Sweet** (218 Church at Market, 552-8992, <http://sweetsweetsweet.wordpress.com>, Fri.-Sun. only). **Sweet Constructions** (roving stand, 307-5699, www.sweetconstructions.com). **Tell Tale Preserve Co.** (www.telltalepreserveco.com; store opening at 33 Maiden at Kearny in mid-November, but stocking boxes at Coffee Bar and Sightglass Coffee). **Wholesome Bakery** (331 Cortland at Bennington, 343-5414, www.wholesomebakery.com).

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