

Thinking Outside of the *Cake* Box

Submitted by Owen Sound Downtown Improvement Area

Written by Anne Käärid

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Just down the street from the Roxy Theatre a new-to-downtown bakery has emerged. Walk through the door of **MarJennys Cakes + More** and you've crossed the threshold of a confectionary taste delight. The atmosphere is welcoming and clean, complete with smells reminiscent of an old-fashioned Grandma's kitchen. Lucky Downtown visitors and passers-by can now satisfy the hankering for nostalgic, made-from-scratch goodness, where MarJenny's is apt to take your taste buds on a trip down memory lane.

Owner/Operator Marg McMillan, and her husband Ernie welcomed me into their kitchen (after donning the appropriate hairnet), to talk about the journey of MarJennys, and their decision to open up in Downtown Owen Sound. Marg reminisced about her experiences with her Mom, her Grandma, and her Great-Grandmother. All of these women were bakers, and being in the kitchen and watching these elders bake was part of her growing up and her early learning know-how. Baking since she was about nine or ten, Marg began looking more seriously at the practise in her early adult years by taking baking and decorating courses through McCalls Decorating School, and subsequent workshops and courses.

Marg has been baking for all of her life, mostly making celebratory cakes for birthdays and weddings. In 2005 she took her baking business to another level, and moved the cake business from her designated area of her living room into a separate, fully functional kitchen in a back room off the house. She was licensed and inspected by the health unit, and began running as a functional home bakery. Last year Ernie retired, and after some surgery Marg gave in her notice for retirement as well. Ernie had his eye on the location at 275 9th Street East, and after a few visits and meetings, in faith they decided to open up shop in Downtown Owen Sound. They keep the home-bakery exclusively for gluten free and nut free baking, to assure there isn't any cross- adulteration with non GF or nut ingredients.

Marg is passionate about honouring her family's multi-generational recipe legacy, and has included recipes passed down from Ernie's family as well. "Many of these old recipes have been written down as a dash of this, or a palm-measure of that. It has taken much research to translate these measurements into mainstream units to develop the recipes for reproduction in the bakery." Marg and Ernie are proud to support local producers and companies for as much local produce and fresh ingredients as possible in their cakes to Texas filled cup-cakes.

Wedding cakes and designed/carved cakes have been a big part of the business. "We like to make something unique for each order. We encourage people to bring in their ideas, but we never replicate another design. We will take the essence of the look and add the client's ideas and wants to designing

each cake.” But MarJennys is “+ More” as the name indicates. MarJennys also offers baked treats, pies and tarts. Of course, there is always the option of ordering vegan; gluten, dairy, aluminum and nut free; diabetic friendly; and the use of alternatives to colouring and dyes to suit any allergy or food intolerance. “Each mix is made fresh every morning, with at least 85% of the ingredients made-from-scratch.” states Marg. “We like to think outside of the box, and find solutions to each customer’s personal needs. We just need **you** to tell us what **you** want.” Be sure to check out the weekly featured treat at the bakery for the “Thursday Special”. What a great way to enjoy your afternoon cup of tea!

When I asked Marg and Ernie what they envision for the future, they were excited to speak about bringing in more variety such as breads and buns. The kitchen couple are currently looking at adding frozen meat pies to their complement of fresh fruit frozen pies (apple, wild blueberry, cherry, and mix berry), which are now available. “We received a great response to our home-made mincemeat, and our traditional Jamaican Rum cakes this past Christmas.” They also enjoy giving back to the region and offer support to fundraising events in the area. Both Marg and Ernie spoke highly of the encouragement they have been receiving from local business owners, the media, and the public at large since they have moved to the Downtown location.

With Marg and Ernie’s welcoming storefront and high quality traditional baked goods, coupled with the patronage of the community, it looks like MarJennys Cakes + More has a recipe for sweet success in Downtown Owen Sound!



Marjennys Cakes + More

275 9th Street East

Owen Sound, ON N4K 1N8

(519) 470-2253

<http://www.downtownowensound.ca/marjennys.html>