




Local shop making 15,000 cupcakes for Oprah anniversary

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NUTLEY — There's nothing small about the order that came into The Petite Café on Franklin Avenue a few months ago: bake 15,000 of their signature stuffed cupcakes for the 10th anniversary gala of O Magazine in Times Square.



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Petite Café co-owner Maureen Jaret surrounded by trays of her shop's famous stuffed cupcakes. These desserts — all 15,000 of them — are being prepped for a gala celebrating the 10th anniversary of O Magazine in Times Square.

The three-day celebration will mark 10 years since the first publishing of the women's magazine by talk show superstar Oprah, and Petite Café was selected to dazzle party-goers at the finale party, to be held at the conclusion of a two-mile walk in Manhattan on Mother's Day.

"It's all about Oprah, she's had such an impact on people," said Maureen Jaret, co-owner with her husband, Keith. "This is so thrilling, opportunities like this just don't happen to anyone."

Last November, co-owner Keith created a pink ribbon cupcake to promote breast cancer awareness for the Susan G. Komen Foundation charity dinner. Petite Café's tasty and creative cupcake caught the attention of event organizers, who remembered the company when it came time to plan the O Magazine celebration.

Keith, who invented the café's near 150 varieties, even dreamed up a new flavor for the occasion: a peach cobbler "Gayle" cupcake, named for the magazine's editor and created with her favorite dessert in mind. The shop's most popular flavor, Red Velvet, will be renamed "Oprah" for the party. The cupcakes will be placed on stage in Times Square on a special tiered holder showcasing many flavors, with sparklers on top to make it appear as an anniversary cake.

But arranging the baking and transport of 15,000 desserts is no cakewalk.

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"A lot of planning has gone into it," Maureen said, adding they're creating about 7,000 to 8,000 a day to meet the 15,000 order. "We're pretty much on target. We can bake about 2,000 at a time. The hardest part is getting the mix into the racks, but we have it down to such a science that the stuffing process can go quickly."

As she explained, the cupcakes were first baked in two locations in Nutley and Bloomfield before being refrigerated. From there they are stuffed and iced. The final step will see them loaded onto a rented refrigerated truck to be delivered to New York City at midnight on Saturday. Each of the classic chocolate and vanilla varieties will be given to partygoers in a Petite Café box, put together by shop staff.

Maureen and Keith, a Culinary Institute of America graduate, created the expanding cupcake empire in 2005, following the unexpected success of one of their catering business's desserts.

"We wanted something different, so we made a stuffed cupcake based on Keith's favor candy, Reese's peanut butter cups," Maureen said. The little snack was a big hit. "People started asking us 'what's tomorrow's flavor?'"

Five years later, the shop makes about 12,000 on a weekly basis, selling the cupcakes in locations around New Jersey and New York, including several places in New York City.

"One location near NYU started with an order of four dozen, a week later they requested eight dozen!" Currently the one location showcases 20 dozen of Petite's stuffed sweets.

The little cupcake shop from Nutley has been a part of many high-profile events, such as the recent second season premiere of The Real Housewives of New Jersey reality TV show. Petite created a polka dot ladybug cake for the debut party at the Brownstone in Paterson.

Maureen's favorite past catering experience was the premiere party at the Rainbow Room in New York City for My Fair Wedding with David Tutera.

"But this has to be the most exciting!"