

Baker offers free, out of this world birthday cupcakes

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Just four months into her home-baking cottage industry venture, Mary Corcovelos-Mullin had to shut down operations of Sticky Paws Baking Company to prevent exposure to the COVID-19 coronavirus for her and her partner.

Her mother, Venita Corcovelos, who handles all the company's finances while Mary does the baking, also has to handle cancer and chemo treatments every three weeks.

"So, we had to close for the safety for our family and customers," Corcovelos-Mullin said. "Our customers have been very understanding of it."

She added since the closure last month, she's experienced myriad emotions resulting from the outpouring of kindness and compassion amidst the trauma and chaos.

So, rather than completely shut down, Corcovelos-Mullin decided to take the compassion and kindness parts and pay it back. As mother of three small children, Corcovelos-Mullin didn't want kids to miss out due to social distancing an important developing aspect of growing up – the birthday party.

Corcovelos-Mullin is keeping the oven ready to bake a special six pack of her made from scratch, chocolate galaxy cupcakes so children don't miss out on a birthday cake. She's taking orders each week until noon Thursday and will have the batch ready for pick up on Friday.

"I have six orders for Wednesday already," Corcovelos-Mullin said. "I just want to make sure kids feel special. It's a scary time. They're not certain of things, not in school. Can't have friends over for a party. Anything I can do to make them feel special makes me happy."

The cupcakes are German chocolate, with a tri-color butter cream frosting topped with galaxy pixie sprinkles.

She left her job with Del Norte County to help care for mother when her cancer returned. Rather than sit around, Corcovelos-Mullen said her mother talked her into pursuing her first passion – baking.

"I've always loved to bake for family and friends. They encouraged me saying, 'Hey this would be a great venture to try.' I do have three small children, and with the uncertainty with the economy up and down, after a conversation with my mom, I though why not try this, Corcovelos-Mullen said.

Because it's a cottage industry, Corcovelos-Mullen's kids are not allowed in the kitchen when she's baking. So, she usually baked early in the morning, between midnight and 1 a.m., and from 3-4 a.m. prepared her orders with frosting for pickup. Her menu included sticky paws, drizzled caramel salted cinnamon buns, salted caramel brownies and the German chocolate cupcakes.

Corcovelos-Mullen said while business had been a little slow, she'd been working up to what her customers liked, with a focus on hitting the farmers market, then building up to baking year-round.

Corcovelos-Mullen first posted the birthday package on her Facebook page, Sticky Paws Baking Co., then reposted on Love & Support for Del Norte County Facebook page.

"I just wanted to make sure everybody has an opportunity to put a smile on their face," she said.

After an order is place, the customer makes a porch pickup while Corcovelos-Mullen obeys social distancing guidelines by donning a mask and rubber gloves during the transaction. She said even though it's free of charge, a couple families have insisted on making donations anyway.

"The feedback so far has been very appreciative," Corcovelos-Mullen said. "One boy, his mom said he had autism, this just put a big, giant smile on his face. That really impacted me to see his happiness and joy on his birthday. That's something I can teach my own children. Give kindness and get just a smile alone in return is enough for you."

The free birthday cupcakes is the only baking Corcovelos-Mullen is doing right now. She said she hasn't deciding yet whether to reopen.

"People can be leery with social distancing. I don't want anyone to feel on edge," she said. "Hopefully, if I do reopen, it will be by June 1, if not sooner. My full concern right now is the safety of my family and mom. I will keep people posted on my Facebook page. Stay safe, and I'll be back in business soon."