



# Baking CAKES



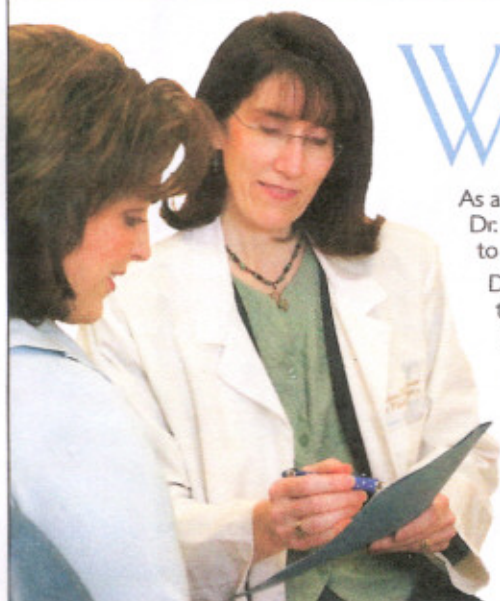
by Judi E. Morgan

It's no surprise that Carol Chanin is in the business of sweets – some heart-shaped even – because she is the real deal, a southern sweetheart who is precisely that: sweet and full of heart. Just ask her friends and fans of Caroletta's Cakes, a Macon-based, one-year-old business that was born, simply put, to help a family friend.

Understand this: Carol considers Loretta Webb part of her family. Speaking softly, but firmly, she explains, "Loretta has devoted 30 years to our family, helping raise our now-grown children, and doing so much more." This loyal and dependable friend allowed Carol to travel with her husband, volunteer and work part-time. "Loretta gave me the freedom to do all of that. She helped us tremendously, this treasured friend."

Then came the time when Loretta needed a helping hand. Her husband, John Earl, was diagnosed with

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Alzheimer's a year ago, resulting in sorrow and financial burdens. Helping Loretta with her growing stack of bills became Carol's mission. When her son Michael called one day from NYC, he overheard Loretta's tears and stated, "Mom, you've got to do something." The young analyst thought a moment and wisely suggested, "Everybody loves your pound cakes. You can sell pound cakes!" Sounding almost too simple, the idea struck a chord. After all, Carol has always loved baking, and she and Loretta could do this together. When Michael added, "Mom, I'd probably have flunked Spanish in high school if my teachers hadn't gotten all of those pound cakes," Carol was amused and moved. Loretta was on board and energized. And both were hopeful.

Ahh, the wisdom and fearlessness of youth.

Thus began what is now Caroletta's Cakes, two dear friends selling delicious pound cakes. Their first steps were small, with Carol calling friends and neighbors, saying in her understated manner, "Loretta and I are baking cakes."

As Georgia's fifth largest city, Macon is still a small town in many ways, so word spread, and orders poured in. Apparently, it's not called "The Heart of Georgia" only because of its central location ... because by Thanksgiving, the Webb's mortgage was current, and by Christmas, that stack of bills was gone. Carol and Loretta looked at each other and said, "We're onto something here!"

Challenged with setting up an official business, Carol's family and friends mobilized to make the dream a reality. For every roadblock—and there were plenty—just as many doors opened. When the health department said that her kitchen wasn't suitable for commercial means, Carol searched (unsuccessfully) for a contract bakery. The problem was solved when a friend spoke to the Christ Episcopal Church Vestry, and their church kitchen became Caroletta's Cakes headquarters. When obstacles nearly derailed that location, the mayor made a call, and things fell back into place. To learn about the many rules and regulations, a friend suggested that Carol take the UGA course "How To Start a Food-Related Business in Georgia." It proved invaluable.

Her daughter Nancy created exquisite packaging with an eye for detail honed by working for a NYC fashion designer. A talented cousin designed the logo, and Carol's husband of 30 years, Robert, showed moral support and encouragement from the start.

Macon photographer Maryann Bates was hired to shoot a selection of cakes for the company's web page and brochure. When asked for the bill at the day's end, Maryann tearfully replied, "Carol, my father had Alzheimer's, and I just wish we'd had an angel like you." There was no bill.

Word of mouth – this being the South after all – has helped the young company grow.

Friends from Columbus, Carol's birthplace, have shown support, as well as friends on St. Simons and Sea Islands, where they often vacation.

Carefully packaged and wrapped in cellophane with artfully-tied ribbons and seasonal flowers, Caroletta Cakes delight upon arrival and more so after tasting! They are named after intricate designs: The Chrysanthemum, Rose, Bavarian, Signature, Babycakes and, yes, The Heart Shaped Cake. Specialty items are often available. Freshly baked and shipped on the same day – never frozen – they always arrive fresh, moist and delicious. Using the freshest ingredients, they take pride in every cake they bake.

Loretta is principal baker now, and Carol handles marketing and business decisions. What was once their vision is now their baby. When a cake is ordered, "we just want you to like it," Carol says in her humble way. Customers' effusive remarks on the website aren't modest at all—these cakes are fantastic!

Relationships and resources combined to create Caroletta's Cakes, and Carol and Loretta are gratified each day "because every step of the way, friends and family and complete strangers help us achieve our goal."

It's no wonder: sweet and full of heart, remember?

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