

## Can't put down cupcakes

### Thanks to creative bakeries, childhood favorite grows up into a treat for adults

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Memory from a lifetime of cupcakes No. 1:

I want the one with chocolate frosting and green gumdrops. I want the one with chocolate frosting and green gumdrops. Oh, no! Craig Rosen took it! I want the one with blue frosting and rainbow sprinkles. I want the one with blue frosting and rainbow sprinkles ...

"Bonjour, Entrez!" reads the chalkboard sign in front of Buckhead's Little Cake Bakery. Open for just a month, Little Cake is well on its faux-finished way to evoking a French patisserie, down to the gleaming display case and cafe tables.

Yet the only pastry for sale is the most American of sweetmeats, the cupcake.

"This is my favorite," says owner Meg Renner of a petite white blob. "It's vanilla on vanilla, made with this fantastic vanilla from Madagascar."

Renner and her partner Pamela Laurent, both event planners, go for a simpler lineup of flavors than are found at Atlanta Cupcake Factory, but with more emphasis on fine ingredients, including both French and Belgian bittersweet couverture for the various iterations of chocolate in the case.

Unlike their crosstown competitors, Renner and Laurent knew exactly who their customers would be.

"We're both big travelers, and we saw that almost every major city has a cupcake bakery," Renner says. "But Atlanta is always the last on the list. We wanted to be the first retail boutique. We want to be the queens of cupcakes. That's our ultimate goal."

#### A CUPCAKE TASTING

Bite-size reviews of some of metro Atlanta's cupcakes:

> Little Cake Bakery, 3792 Roswell Road, 404-841-8856 Comments: Small in stature but across-the-board delicious. The chocolate cupcake with chocolate frosting elicits passion. Daily specials range from cinnamon spice to Hummingbird and key lime. Price: \$2.50

> Atlanta Cupcake Factory, 624 N. Highland Ave., 678-358-9195 Comments: Moist, dense cake with gobs of frosting. Bright lemon and rich coconut are our favorites. Cream cheese in much of the frosting adds either a welcome or intrusive tang. Price: \$2.50

> Matty Cakes, 1830 Piedmont Ave., 404-917-2253 Comments: Usually just a few flavors in the case, but more can be ordered. Great spicy carrot cake and fine red velvet that tastes of chocolate rather than food coloring. Price: \$2.50

> Belly General Store, 772 N. Highland Ave., 404-872-1003 Comments: The basic chocolate and vanilla cupcakes are pretty, if a bit too dry and floury. But the Coca-Cola is moist and scrumptious, and the peanut butter and jelly cupcake is pure fun. Price: \$2

> Highland Bakery, 655 Highland Ave., 404-586-0772 Comments: Massive and heavy, with only a few flavors available. The red velvet tastes of food dye and has a doughy texture. Price: \$3.95