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Daily Dish

The inside scoop on food in Los Angeles

Another season, another reason for Baking Whoopie

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It was late. Probably 2:30 or 3 a.m. I had just arrived home after a long night of ... work. I was hungry. I opened my refrigerator and there it was: A square box tied with a green-polka-dot ribbon and decorated with a circular sticker that read "Baking Whoopie."

I knew what was in it: whoopie pies made by a local company of the same name. I knew because I had already eaten four earlier that day. It was a bad idea to eat more, I thought, as I watched my hand, seemingly disconnected from my body, reach out, open the box and grab a vanilla pie stuffed with mocha crème.

In a feverish, sugar-driven trance I put the pie in my mouth and began to chew. A rush of flavors circled my tongue — salty, sweet and creamy. The next day I woke up and ate a red velvet pie filled with vanilla crème. As I took a sip of coffee and wiped bits of pastry from my mouth it became painfully clear. I was addicted to Baking Whoopie.

It turns out I'm not the only one. The [fledgling company](#) — launched a little under six months ago — is already cranking out several hundred pies per week to a loyal constituency of sweet teeth at Owens Market, the Cabbage Patch and Fandango as well as a slew of mail-order customers around the country.

Whoopie pies, which are basically two rounded pieces of rich cake with creamy frosting sandwiched between them, are traditionally associated with New England but have recently been making a national name for themselves. A [New York Times article](#) last year noted that the nostalgic snacks were beginning to pop up at the same posh bakeries that helped make cupcakes king.

That explains why Baking Whoopie founder Roxy Rubell, who is also a freelance music journalist and a publicist, decided to start the company.

“Retro desserts are coming back in a big way,” said Rubell, who specialized in restaurants when she worked as a publicist. “And I realized either I do it now or I watch someone else do it.”

And because Rubell belongs to a family of culinary doers (her husband, Dave Rubell, was Bruce Springsteen’s private chef and has cooked for five U.S. presidents) she rolled up her sleeves and began toying with the recipes she savored as a child in New Hampshire.

To make her pies stick out in a West Coast market she reduced their size from 3-inches in diameter to 2-inches (so as not to scare away all the twiggy-thin people) and began rounding up a variety of gourmet and natural ingredients, including Callebaut and Valrhona chocolate, Vermont maple syrup, Tahitian vanilla, and Maldon sea salt.

Then she got creative with flavor profiles, churning out tasty but non-traditional combinations such as Meyer Lemon with Ginger Crème; Peanut Butter with Salted Caramel Crème; Vermont Maple with Cinnamon Crème; and Banana with Vanilla Rum Crème.

The most popular one, however, says Rubell, is the Belgian Chocolate with Mocha Crème.

The fun and fresh results perfectly match the bouncy timbre of the ridiculously good company name. Speaking of which, how did Rubell dream Baking Whoopie up? “I thought of it in the bedroom, it just sort of came to me,” she said, laughing. “I was vacuuming. I wish it could be a sexier story, but it’s not.”

-- Jessica Gelt

Photo: Kirk McKoy / Los Angeles Times

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