



Textile-engineer-turned-stay-at-home-mom Yael Miller handcrafts detailed cakes for special occasions. She's one of several so-called "mompreneurs" who have created exciting new food businesses based out of their homes.

THE MAKING OF MOMPRENEURS

Tie on an apron, fire up your kitchen stove ... and turn a profit.
Welcome to 'cottage food,' 2013 version.

by RONA GINDIN photos by JULIUS MAYO

WE ALL KNOW THEM: the moms who sell their clever birthday cakes to fellow parents' parties, or bottle up some jam to earn pocket money at the local farmers' market. What before was little more than an industrious hobby is now known as "cottage food" production. It's a hot topic among local governments, as those who oversee food safety try to rein in control a tad so that homemade jar of tasty something-or-other you pick up on a whim doesn't inadvertently make you sick.

Many call cottage food folks mompreneurs, indicating the

homespun, small-time nature of these businesses. As for "cottage food," it means "preparing it in your cottage," explains Rita Law, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent III at the Seminole County's University of Florida/IFAS Extension office. If that "cottage" is a 3,000-square-foot suburban home, so be it.

Central Florida is rich with folks whipping up tasty treats in their home kitchens. That's OK under Florida law, as long as these go-getters follow certain rules. Among the restrictions: make only safe-ish foods such as breads, pastries, honey, jelly,

Left: Andrea Chase of Spring Hammock Sundries creates jams, jellies and other preserved items using only local ingredients. Right: What started as a hobby for cake decorator Yael Miller has become a flourishing business.



fruit pies, seasonings, pasta, granola, nuts, popcorn and flavored vinegars. Riskier recipes that use meat, fish, shellfish, canning techniques, dairy products and more don't make the cut. Culinar-ians who want to sell those items need to go the commercial food route instead, renting professional kitchen space and earning food safety certification. Cottage food folks also need to label their goods clearly, including ingredients and their home addresses—so if there is a problem, the food police can find them. And they can't bring in more than \$15,000 a year from their endeavors.

Complicating matters: layers of government. Although the state of Florida approved cottage food production in 2011, and Orange County adopted the rules in 2013, the city of Orlando hasn't addressed the issue, notes LuAnn Duncan, Orange County extension agent, Family & Consumer Sciences, of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences. And, Duncan

adds, if your homeowners' association nixes all businesses from its residences, you're out of luck. Lake is looking into it now, and we can't seem to find information on Seminole or Osceola. Best bet: If you want to cash in your creations and your HOA is A-OK with that, ask your local government what's what, because some cities have their own regulations.

Happily, plenty of talented, passionate Orlandoans have forged ahead and made their cottage foods available to the public via direct sales, the only way they're allowed to get their products from their pantry to yours. Here we feature five mompreneurs who are offering up enticing edibles made with love.

Yael Miller

Ooga Ooga Cake Art LLC

Yael Miller tends to throw waves of passion at her interests. Once she left her career as a textile engineer to raise her children, she became consumed, over

time, with oil painting and PTA management. But when her cake-baking projects evolved from simple kiddie confections to a 2009 masterpiece resembling three ladybugs on a leaf, Miller knew where to direct her energies next.

As she baked upon request for friends—at first, as a favor—she “really wanted to get into more detailed fondant work” and “started stalking really famous sugar artists,” laughs the Dr. Phillips resident. While visiting her hometown in Israel, she spent “three days of intensive tutoring” learning how to create figures for cakes from industry icon Tal Tsafrir. She has since attended classes closer to home, including one by New York's renowned Colette Peters as well as others with Norman Davis, Zane Beg, Ruth Rickey and Nicholas Lodge.

Today this focused mompreneur conjures up one-of-a-kind cakes, all from scratch, for occasions from baby showers to retirement parties. Each is designed with elements that relate

to the person honored, such as an iPad for a bar mitzvah boy and a Converse sneaker for a teacher who has the world's largest collection of the footwear. When clients need desserts that are kosher, Miller prepares them in the kitchen of her synagogue, Maitland's Congregation Ohev Shalom, and hires the required mashgiach to oversee.

In addition to cakes, Miller bakes cake pops, cake truffles and decorated cookies.
ooga-ooga.net

ANDREA CHASE

Spring Hammock Sundries

Andrea Chase has long made jellies and baked cookies for fun, and she worked at an artisan bread company, but all that was essentially a "part-time housewife job," she admits. Once her divorce set her into need-cash-quick mode, this savvy sweets-lover revved up.

Today she is proprietor of Spring Hammock Sundries, a cottage food business specializing in "hyperseasonal pantry goods" such as jams and jellies made from "only local produce, and I grow my own herbs." She also does custom baking.

Chase's offerings are unusual. Expect her strawberry jam to be laced with rosemary from her backyard garden, perhaps, or her blueberry spread to be invigorated with thyme. (Many customers stir the jams into cocktails.) Even her sugar cookies might have honeybell orange and cardamom flavorings, say, instead of "traditional things like vanilla or cinnamon."

Chase has clearly filled a niche. She began selling her wares in January at the Monday Audubon Park Community Market, and her inventory often sells out by evening's end. Encouraged both by



COMMERCIAL KITCHENS

If your dreams of cooking for a living go beyond the cottage foods rules, look into renting space from a commercial kitchen. Each is different. Maybe you can rent for an hour or a week, maybe not. Perhaps you need to clean

the space yourself, perhaps not. Do they have the kinds of pans you need? Storage space? The ability to receive deliveries for you? How about WiFi? Here are some Central Florida facilities to help you get started.

A-1 Commissaries

6422 Milner Blvd., Orlando
(407) 856-4280
a1commissaries.com

A Chateau Kitchen

955 W. Fairbanks Ave., Winter Park
(407) 492-7374
achateaukitchen.com

East End Market (opening summer 2013)

3201 Corrine Dr., Orlando
(321) 236-3316
eastendmkt.com

For Cupcake's Sake, Inc.

655 Arnau Drive, New Smyrna Beach
(386) 212-8639
forcupcakesake.com/kitchen.htm

Heavenly Flan Kitchen

1076 W. State Rd. 436, Ste. 1150,
Altamonte Springs
(407) 580-8679
heavenlyflan.com

Kissimmee Kitchen Share

1417 Smith St., Kissimmee
(407) 556-5421
kissimmeeKitchenShare.com

Oak Ridge Market at Artegon Orlando (under development)

5250 International Drive, Orlando
(410) 856-1816, ssless@paragonoutlets.com
paragonoutlets.com

Orlando Bakery Rental (for baked goods only)

Winter Park/Maitland area
(407) 588-RENT (7368)
orlandobakeryrental.com

Truffles & Trifles

711 W. Smith St., Orlando
(407) 648-0838
trufflesandtrifles.com

Puff 'n Stuff

250 Rio Drive, Orlando
(407) 629-7833
puffnstuff.com

Ginger Hartley took a problem—oversupply of fresh pears from her backyard tree—and turned it into a successful business.

“seeing people’s faces when they taste things” and the flexible hours, which allow her plenty of time for her children, Chase will soon expand. “It has gotten pretty intense pretty quickly,” she says excitedly. The next step is securing use of a commercial kitchen “so I can expand my line and produce items not covered under the cottage laws and maybe eventually brick and mortar — and more custom baking.”

In sum, “It’s pretty fun,” she says enthusiastically.
facebook.com/springham-mocksundries

LISA MCMAHON

Nature’s Way Catering & Food Products

“I love to cook. I lo-o-o-ve to cook,” Lisa McMahon says. So it’s not shocking that, after trying to support herself post-divorce as a full-time paralegal, she headed to her home kitchen and found a way to make a living from it.

From her (“sterilized several times a day”) laminate countertops on the Space Coast, the former Orlandoan developed a recipe for candied pecans “with the sugar, like the ones at the mall, but these are so much better,” she says. She set up tables at local farmers’ markets and sold out regularly, but lost potential customers who can’t eat refined sugar or gluten. So, she came up with a second version, this one a special-diet-friendly spiced honey version helped by the bees at Dansk Farms. Hit.

And then ... “And then I came up with a caramel sauce called honey caramel, also made with the Dansk Farm honey. This stuff is just evil,” she boasts.

Two months into her new venture, McMahon, who sources local ingredients where possible, is hosting a brisk busi-



ness at farmers’ markets in Rockledge, Melbourne and Cocoa Village. On her table, she sells some products from the local-food-oriented Growing Synergy, such as hot sauces and grits. She’s also developing a catering business, using a borrowed commercial kitchen. Clients include Orlando’s Olympia High School. (407) 702-0028, facebook.com/natureswayflorida

GINGER HARTLEY

Ginger’s Jams, Jellies & Such

Ginger Hartley is not a cottage food producer. She would have been, though, if the option had existed 12 years ago.

That’s about when the 50+-year-old pear tree on Hartley’s Ocala property, Nichols Farm, started producing too much fruit—way too much fruit. “I had to do something with them,” she says now, “but I had no idea what. So I made a pear preserve, a pear relish, a pear jelly, a pear everything. I had nev-

er made any of those things before. I gave them all away.”

A couple of years later, now proficient at transforming fruit into confection, Hartley asked the event planner of a festival in Avalon Park if she could sell her wares. Following a simple yes, along with an education about legal requirements such as a state license, her business began. “It has gone well for me,” she says.

The rules then necessitated that Hartley prepare her wares in a commercial kitchen, and so she did. Today her line includes not only pear concoctions but items as diverse as blueberry-pomegranate jelly, mango chutney, apple butter and praline syrup. Since Ginger’s Jams isn’t a cottage food business, Hartley supplements her festival and Winter Park Farmers’ Market sales with an online store, which is forbidden to cottage food folks. A few local retailers also carry her products.

(407) 375-5280, gingersjams.com **E**