

JUST DESSERTS

Small pleasures created with a large dollop of talent grace the menu at Fifi's.

It's an odd nickname, but apt: Jenny Cupcake, aka Jennifer Kessler, is creating a sensation at Fifi's in The Sanctuary in downtown Orlando. Her recipe for success is far from half-baked: Kessler started baking with her mother as a child; add a cup of obsession (she has visited nearly every famous cupcake bakery in New York City), plus a teaspoon of quirkiness (besides being a fabulous baker, Kessler is an incredible painter with only one subject – cupcakes). And voila! As the newest addition to Fifi's already decadent menu, Kessler's cupcakes are simply the *pièce de résistance*. Since May, she's been delighting patrons with her treats, even upsetting a few who arrived at the restaurant only to find their favorite cupcake had sold out.

Surprisingly, Kessler doesn't come from a culinary background. She started off in the art world, studying for five years at the Savannah College of Art and Design. There she began creating her famous cupcake paintings, now on display at Fifi's as well as in galleries in New York, Savannah and France. A vibrant pastiche of pinks, purples and chocolate browns, the compositions look as mouthwatering as her baked goods.

After working in New York for a few years, Kessler finally stopped ignoring that little voice inside her head that told her she was destined to create cupcakes. She moved back home to Orlando to pursue her dream, and after a successful cupcake tasting with the owners of Fifi's,



her creations were branded Jenny Cupcake. The rest is sweet history.

Luckily for Kessler, the saying “you can't please everyone all of the time” simply doesn't apply. Everybody likes cupcakes, right? Offering a huge variety of creative concoctions, she really does please just about everyone. She's even working on a gluten-free and a vegan cupcake.

The edgy, artsy side of Kessler's personality comes out in creations such as “Gentlemen Prefer Reds” – a delicious, red velvet delight with a cream cheese frosting. Not bad for a girl with no formal culinary training.

Fifi's offers a variety of Kessler's cupcakes daily, and the list is conveniently posted online for those who like to plan their visit based on available flavors. Monday is the only day my personal favorite is offered: Caramel & Pecan Upside Down Cupcake with Rum Whipped Cream.

Cupcake flavors also change seasonally based on available ingredients and upcoming holidays. This fall, Kessler will unveil new delights, flavors such as hot chocolate, gingerbread and caramel apple made with an apple spice cake, cream cheese frosting and a caramel drizzle on top.

These cupcakes are seriously delicious. All recipes are made completely from scratch (you won't find a Duncan Hines box in Kessler's kitchen) and with plenty of butter and cream. Wrapped in a cute, pink box and priced at just \$2 each, these confections are perfect for enjoying lakeside at Lake Eola Park.

Through Fifi's, Kessler is doing a fair amount of catering for weddings and birthdays, as well as baby and wedding showers. A person who blurs the lines between artist and baker, she plans to create more flavors, continue painting and even write a children's book about cupcakes. For now, the cupcake market has been cornered by this 26-year-old entrepreneur whose creations simply take the cake. – *Kristen Manieri*

To learn more, visit jennycupcake.com and fifisorlando.com.