



Lily's Cookies, owned by Christine McCrae-Kelly, features an assortment of nondecorated treats as well as iced versions.

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Custom cookies



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McCrae-Kelly wanted her Christmas designs to be special.

Like an old-fashioned bakery, Lily's offers edible, unforgettable art.

BY JENNIFER MCINNIS
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Fresh-baked cookies will put a smile on anyone's face, but people really light up when they see the edible artistry of Christine McCrae-Kelly. Business has picked up since the artist and baker moved Lily's Cookies to its new location in Monte Vista, and she expects the holiday season will be even busier.

"I wanted to be like an old-fashioned bakery," McCrae-Kelly said. She opened Lily's Cookies in 2002 in the first floor of Silo restaurant on Austin Highway. Last year, Lily's Cookies moved to McCullough Avenue.

McCrae-Kelly said a lot of her business still comes via word of mouth, but the location gets more foot traffic and is a popular after-school stop.

"We've learned so much, and we're gradually adding more stuff." In addition to the decorated cookies, Lily's offers a selection of undecorated cookies and cookie bars,

such as Hello Dolly bars and brownies.

Three full-time and another five to six part-time employees crank out cookies daily, filling the cases and orders for special events. They recently completed an order for 2,700 cookies, the largest so far.

It is a labor of love that McCrae-Kelly says is rewarded when she sees the faces of her customers.

That excitement is what inspires her to create cookies that make great gifts for the holidays.

"I want to do special things and really pretty



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McCrae-Kelly decorates Santa Claus cookies at Lily's Cookies. In addition to the popular Santa cutouts, other holiday designs include Christmas trees and menorahs.



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Texas themes, such as the Alamo and boots, are popular.

cookies for Christmas." That includes cookies with Texas and San Antonio themes, such as the Alamo or Christmas trees and cowboy hats. And, of course, "everybody orders the Santa Claus," she said.

Lily's also has Hanukkah cookies, such as the Star of David and menorahs, available for order.

Lily's Cookies creates custom cookies as well.

Prices vary, with the more elaborate designs costing a little more.

Decorated cookies cost \$2.25 to \$3, depending on size and detail. You can get 12 nondecorated cookies for \$6. The brownies and Hello Dolly cookie bars cost \$1.50 and \$2, respectively.

Large orders of cookies come in dainty pink boxes or on trays, but custom cookies can be wrapped

Lily's Cookies

WHERE: 2716 McCullough Ave.

HOURS: 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in December

in cellophane to give as hostess gifts or party favors.

Orders should be placed at least a week in advance and can be taken by phone or in person. McCrae-Kelly recommends calling ahead to ensure you get the cookies you want.

There is always a seasonal selection of decorated cookies in the case. Lily's Cookies also has a daily cookie bar with a variety of about eight cookies Mondays through Wednesdays and a choice of 10-12 on Thursdays and Fridays.

"If the sign is out, we're open," McCrae-Kelly said.

CALENDAR

Bread and Muffin Workshop (for adults)

When: 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Young Chef's Academy, 20330 Huebner Road, Suite 110. Register at (210) 402-0023.

Cost: \$55, \$20 of which holds your seat and is nonrefundable unless class is canceled.

Info: Learn to bake breads and muffins. Class will cover grissini, a whole grain five-seed bread, a multi-seed cracker bread, Cheddar cheese muffins and a crusty garlic bread.

University of Wednesday — Top 10 Wines

When: 6-7 p.m. Wednesday

Where: Whole Foods Market, 255 E. Basse Road. Register at (210) 826-4676 or sign up at Guest Services.

Cost: Free

Info: Try affordable, top-notch wines.

Holiday Dinner Party from Lambert's

When: 6:30-9 p.m. Thursday

Where: Central Market Cooking School, 4821 Broadway. Register at (210) 368-8617.

Cost: \$60

Info: Join owner and executive chef Lou Lambert of Lambert's in Austin and Fort Worth for new tips and techniques as you learn to make Roasted-Beet Salad; Port Arthur Oyster and Shrimp Stew; Grilled Butterflied Leg of Lamb; and Cajeta Caramelitas with Mocha Ice Cream.

Elegant Holiday Sweets

When: 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Saturday

Where: Central Market Cooking School, 4821 Broadway. Register at (210) 368-8617.

Cost: \$45

Info: Learn to make some holiday treats that make great gifts. Also learn to package them so they look as good as they taste.

Holiday Entertaining

When: 6:30-9 p.m. Dec. 15

Where: Central Market Cooking School, 4821 Broadway. Register at (210) 368-8617.

Cost: \$60

Info: Join the Dining Diva and cookbook author Molly Fowler as she teaches tips for stress-free entertaining. You'll get step-by-step instructions for Baked Oysters with Caramelized Onions and Bacon; Salad of Mixed Greens with Spicy Cranberry Vinaigrette; Stuffed Beef Tenderloin with Zesty Red Wine Reduction; Green Chile Mashed Potatoes; and Pecan Truffle Tart.

Holiday Brunch

When: 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Dec. 16

Where: Central Market Cooking School, 4821 Broadway. Register at (210) 368-8617.

Cost: \$45

Info: Molly Fowler shows how to make the perfect holiday brunch: Fruit Compote with Honey Yogurt Panna Cotta; Beef Machaca Chilaquiles with Black Beans; Corn Relish; Grilled Spicy Polenta Wedges; and Mocha Bread Pudding with Kahlúa Sauce.

Robert Earl Keen Christmas Show with Al Barlow

When: 7 p.m. Dec. 18 and 19

Where: Floore's Country Store, 14464 Old Bandera Road in Helotes. Tickets available at Floore's, www.liveatfloores.com, or by phone through All Access Today at (866) 255-2223.

Cost: \$30

Info: Robert Earl Keen, Floore's Country Store in Helotes and KCYY radio have partnered with the San Antonio Food Bank. Bring at least three nonperishable food items to donate and be eligible to win a meet-and-greet dinner with Keen after the show. All ages welcome. Indoors, so seating is limited. A drawing will be held each night.

Gingerbread House Workshop

When: 9 a.m.-noon Dec. 19

Where: International Folk Culture Center, 411 S. W. 24th St., at Our Lady of the Lake University. Register at (210) 431-3922 by 5 p.m. Dec. 16 to reserve your spot, or e-mail ifcc@lake.ollusa.edu.

Cost: \$5 donation requested for building materials.

Info: Bring your own candy. Children are welcome, but must be under constant supervision by the adult who accompanies them.

ZAPATA

CONTINUED FROM 1J

grill pan. I've long been faithful to the All-Clad Grande Grill (\$79.99 at macys.com), while there's a nice selection of stovetop grills at target.com starting at \$19.99.

■ To instill confidence in the kitchen, sign them up for a subscription to Cook's Illustrated magazine, the leader in how-to gourmet with tried-and-true recipes, illustrations and the best in equipment testing. I'm relying on the latest issue to guide me through a hearty minestrone soup for next week's dinner party. Only \$24.95 for a year's subscription (six issues) or \$34.95 for a yearly online membership at cooks.illustrated.com.

■ To show them how food can be healthy and delicious, pick up a copy of Ellie Krieger's "The Food You Crave" (Taunton, \$28). Krieger, a regis-

tered dietitian and host of the Food Network's "Healthy Appetite," includes inspiring recipes for hearty and healthy foods you actually want to eat, including cowboy steak with coffee and ancho rub and chicken potpie with a phyllo crust.

■ To encourage healthier snacking, go local. The French Wire Fruit Bowl from Pottery Barn (\$29 at potterybarn.com) or woven basket filled with fresh fruits from an area farmers market (picktexas.com) would make a sweet gift.

■ To help them cut back on sugary sodas and energy drinks, fill their stocking with a nice tin of antioxidant rich tea. I recently brewed and chilled a green mint tea from the Ineeka line (\$10.99 at Whole Foods), and it became an instant family favorite.

■ To help them incorporate healthier fats, choose a beautiful bottle of heart-healthy olive oil and, for flavor without added fat, a pot of fresh herbs such as winter-hardy cilantro.

The Culinary Herb Basket with oregano, thyme, sage and rosemary (\$49.95 at surlatable.com) would also make a welcome gift.

■ To help them meet exercise goals, provide motivation through music. Go beyond the gift card, and click on "Buy iTunes Gifts" on the iTunes home page to gift a specific album or custom playlist that will inspire neighborhood runs or dance-offs in the living room. "Thriller," anyone?

■ And finally, to help make 2010 a positive year for health, offer your time and commitment. Create and sign a specific contract that says you'll be there for morning walks or will watch the kids during bike rides. Your support is priceless.

Claudia Zapata is a registered dietitian. Her column appears every other Sunday in S.A. Life. E-mail her at czhealth@gmail.com and follow her at Twitter at @ClaudiaZapata.

FRONT

CONTINUED FROM 1J

comes Peppered Steak.

"I tried to make it so that if you don't know French food, you'll love it," Cohen explained, "and if you know French food, you'll still love it."

No more nouveau, almost

Maybe it was the great ratings that this year's Beaujolais Nouveau has received, but it's very difficult to find many more bottles of the new wine that was released on Nov. 18.

"Oh, we sold out of it in two hours," joked a clerk at Joe Saglimbeni's Fine Wine.

Similarly, Central Market sold out of it in about a week. Whole Foods Market, SeaZar's on North New Braunfels Avenue, Gabriel's on Callaghan Road and Twin Liquors on Basse Road reported having a few bottles in stock when we called last week.

Some connoisseurs think that



Food for thought

The discovery of a new dish does more for the happiness of mankind than the discovery of a new star."

JEAN-ANTHELME BRILLAT SAVARIN

making a fuss over the annual tradition of releasing a vintage on the third Thursday of November is more hype than substance, while others enjoy the attention for the first wine of the season.

This year's release, in the words of Wine Spectator, "will likely go down as one of Beaujolais' best vintages on record."

In other words, call ahead if you want to try and snag any of the last remaining bottles in the city.

— Edmund Tijerina