



Leslie Morris and her cupcake empire.



► Lollipop Bakery brings cupcakes, with lofty goals of high tea, to Beijing expats' doorsteps

SUGARRUSHORDERS

By Michael Gold

The history of cupcakes in Beijing is about as short as Chang'an Jie is long—all the more reason, according to Leslie Morris, founder and as-yet sole employee of the Lollipop Bakery, to stake out one's territory in what she hopes will become the next Beijing food craze.

"There is absolutely no competition for fine cupcakes in Beijing," Morris, a native of Hong Kong via London, said during a recent interview at her home bakery near Yong'anli. "Hong Kong has several, even Shanghai has a few, but it's a completely untapped market here."

Morris' motives for venturing into the cupcake market extend far beyond mere novelty, however; even her enthusiastically-petted love of tony English sweets—acquired, natch, from granny—doesn't appear at much an impetus as that simple desire, hidden not too far beneath her messy shock of curly brown hair and striking green eyes, to engage in a venture at once wildly passionate, risky and entrepreneurial, despite all the pitfalls that come with it.

"We baked 1,000 cupcakes for the recent expat show," she said, lapsing into her frequent, slightly batty habit of referring to herself in the plural. "If I had known just how much work was

involved—well, let's just say over the course of four days I got about eight hours sleep."

Morris' work ethic is certainly paying off, at least in the form of some spunking good word-of-mouth among the expat community.

"She really manages to work magic in a country where baked goods are really hard to come by," said Jo Kent, an American expat living in Beijing. "She's picked a industry that's really going to expand."

As Morris explains, however, she's had to scale back her grand ambitions fairly significantly since starting to take stock of the market.

"My initial plan—and still my ultimate goal—was high tea," she said, rattling off with a salesperson's perfunctory zest the constituents of the posh British tradition: "It's a girlfriends outing on a weekend afternoon at the Fitz and includes three types of sandwiches, cucumber, ham and cheese, and salmon (no crust), scones, clotted cream and jams, and chocolates. And, of course, tea."

It doesn't take an expert to grasp that this See and Be City-style scene won't exactly spread like wildfire among the QQ-ing Hello Kitty set, which is why Morris chose cupcakes as her entrance into the Beijing foodie scene. "Cupcakes are small and cute, a tiny indulgence you don't have to feel bad

about," she said. "This city can be such a frustrating place—I just wanted to bring a little Englishness to Beijing."

For Morris, a major aspect of creating that psychic escape is the brand itself—a mini-universe of funky design concepts and eye-catching packaging. "I wanted the cases to look like little hard bags," she said, holding up a prototype cupcake box of swirling rainbow flourishes and modernist zebra stripes. "Theoretically you could even use these for other things after you're done with the cupcakes."

So far, her successes seem to spring less from her actual company than from

Morris, Inc.—her indelibly bubbly personality and cheerful, let's-have-a-chat vibe, the tinder upon which positive word-of-mouth spreads like wildfire. Though the cakes are baked to perfection and pack a light, sugary punch, no one expects the cupcake to deftly outdo chocolate or cheesecake as the dessert of the gods, so to build buzz and get her product out there, Morris relies on friends to spread the word.

"Whilst in London you can just go online and read ratings of the best designers, I had to find mine in Beijing through friends' recommendations," she said. "And good gossip led to all my early sponsorship gigs," such as the Yale University Beijing Club Halloween Ball and the Oxford-Cambridge Beijing Club Christmas Ball.

"Everyone just told me how amazing the cupcakes were," she said, delving into a laundry list of her deceptively simple recipe ("eggs, flour, butter, milk and sugar, and icing sugar is the main ingredient in the frosting—along with a few secret ingredients"), all baked-to-order from home and hand-delivered by Morris, though she has immediate plans to hire some help and future plans to set up a proper store over the summer.

"I just want that charming, old-fashioned English bakery," she said. "It may sound like a cliché, but I think that sort of thing could really catch on here."

Lollipop Bakery

Tel: 551272974
Email: Cupcakes@lollipopbakery.cn
Website: lollipopbakery.cn
Cost: 300—230 yuan per dozen cupcakes



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Sugar rush orders

Source: Global Times

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By Michael Gold

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Morris' motives for venturing into the cupcake market extend far beyond mere novelty, however; even her enthusiastically-gesticulated love of tony English sweets - acquired, natch, from granny - doesn't appear as much an impetus as that simple desire, hidden not too far beneath her messy shock of curly brown hair and striking green eyes, to engage in a venture at once wildly passionate, risky and entrepreneurial, despite all the pitfalls that come with it.

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"My initial plan - and still my ultimate goal - was high tea," she said, rattling off with a salesperson's perfunctory zest the constituents of the posh British tradition: "It's a girlfriends' outing on a weekend afternoon at the Ritz and includes three types of sandwiches, cucumber, ham and cheese, and salmon (no crust), scones, clotted cream and jams, and chocolates. And, of course, tea."



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For Morris, a major aspect of creating that psychic escape is the brand itself - a mini-universe of funky design concepts and eye-catching packaging. "I wanted the cases to look like little hand bags," she said, holding up a prototype cupcake box of swirling rainbow flourishes and modernist zebra stripes. "Theoretically you could even use these for other things after you're done with the cupcakes."

So far, her successes seem to spring less from her actual company than from Morris, Inc. - her indelibly bubbly personality and cheerful, let's-have-a-chat vibe, the tinder upon which positive word-of-mouth spreads like wildfire. Though the cakes are baked to perfection and pack a light, sugary punch, no one expects the cupcake to dethrone chocolate or cheesecake as the dessert of the gods, so to build buzz and get her product out there, Morris relies on friends to spread the word.

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