

Sweet success

Brazilian-born Beth Aguiar discovers she can have her cake and eat it, too

By Lisa Evans

the kitchen was covered [with cake stuff]," she says. The family upgraded to a newer home with an unfinished basement where Aguiar could design her dream second kitchen for her cake business.

Chantilly Cake Designs (chantillycakedesigns.com) now fulfills orders for baptisms, birthday parties, weddings and other special

hood isn't without its challenges. "When you're running a home business, you're always working," she says. "Sometimes I see myself working until three in the morning and then I have to wake up at seven to drive the kids to school."

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events. Each cake is made to order from scratch and designed after a consultation with the client. It seems there's no theme Aguiar can't make a cake for. Some of her unique designs include an iPhone cake, a shoebox cake, a ladybug cake and many more.

Keeping to her roots, Aguiar's cakes contain a Brazilian touch. "I like to play with the recipes. If I get a North American recipe, I will twist it a little bit to make it my way. It still tastes North American, but with a little Brazilian twist," she says. With 40 per cent of her clients immigrants from Brazil, Aguiar has incorporated Brazilian flavours and style into her cakes.

"[Brazilians] like very moist cakes. Not moist. Very moist," she laughs. Many of her Brazilian clients complain that the cakes they get in the grocery store and Canadian bakeries aren't as sweet as what they are used to in Brazil. "We use a lot of condensed milk [to add sweetness to the cake]," she says. Creamy custards and fruit fillings are the most popular among her Brazilian clients, as is dulce de leche — a Spanish flavour that is gaining popularity in Canada. "President's Choice just started selling it in a jar, but mine is better," she laughs.

Juggling a business and mother-

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No party is complete without a cake, but for Brazilian-born baker Beth Aguiar, not just any cake will do. The owner of Chantilly Cake Designs in Mississauga, Ontario, sometimes spends days working on a client's order. "I'm a perfectionist. I'm very picky," she says. Aguiar works out of her home, turning any theme into an edible work of art, making sure her cakes are the stars of the party.

A cake-making business wasn't what Aguiar imagined for herself when she arrived in Canada. After working in an entry-level administration position for three-and-a-half years, Aguiar was on maternity leave with her second child when she discovered a hidden talent for baking.

Being at home with a new baby and a toddler had her fantasizing for some mommy alone time. "I decided to take a course at night, just to get out a bit and see some

adults," she says. On a whim, she registered for a cake decorating course at Michael's craft store. "The course had four levels and I took them all," she says. The classes sparked Aguiar's creativity and reignited a passion for baking. "I always liked to make desserts. I had an easy bake oven [when I was a child], but I didn't know how to decorate," she says.

In 2006, she started selling her homemade cakes to friends and neighbours. "I never put a business plan on paper. I just started selling the cakes and it started to get bigger," she says. After a few months, she placed an ad in the Brazilian newspaper and word of mouth caused her home-based business to explode.

Her home kitchen soon became overrun with custards, icing sugar and cake decorating books. "I was doing everything in my kitchen. My husband sometimes had to take the kids out to eat because



Beth Aguiar adds a Brazilian flare to her home-based cake design business.