

HEIGHTS • INWOOD

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Getting To Know You

By Geri Reynolds



There are many occasions during a year when we entertain family and friends. Dining with guests, friends and relatives is generally a source of great pleasure.

Hospitality is a precious human quality: whether it's simply coffee with one person; a well attended buffet or a sit-down formal dinner, the occasion is not complete without dessert. Desserts can be the "crowning touch" to any occasion large or small. Desserts can be interesting, attractive, colorful, or just a tasty morsel such as a piece of chocolate.

The most popular and oldest desserts are cakes, which in some form have been known since earliest times. The use of sweetened dough is referred to in ancient writing. In old England and Europe nearly every religious occasion was celebrated with a cake of one kind or another.

The old saying "Easy as baking a cake" is not really true. Baking is a science and follows

basic rules of chemistry, and baking requires accuracy and skill.

A unique bakery, Carrot Top, is located on Broadway near 214 Street. The specialty of Carrot Top is an absolutely delicious and moist carrot cake. You really must taste it to believe it. The carrot cake can be frozen, thawed at room temperature and still taste as if it's freshly baked; retaining its full natural rich flavor.

The owner and manager of Carrot Top is a pretty young woman, Renee Allen.

In private life Renee is Mrs. Robert Mancini. Her husband is very supportive and helps her in all aspects of the business. He designed and did the remodeling of this modern, sparkling-clean bakery.

Carrot Top Bakery has been located at the present site for two years. A visit to this bakery is an adventure.

The Bakery's walls are painted a dazzling white,

trimmed with natural wood and the lighting system makes it seem like a sunny day in June inside the bakery.

The feeling is that you are merely sitting up in a close neighbor's oversized kitchen enjoying a chat over coffee.

Renee explains that cleanliness is very important to her.

She stresses quality control and uses only the finest ingredients in her cakes. Fresh carrots are delivered every day to add to the special taste of her cake.

It was interesting to talk to this personable young woman and to learn how she became interested in baking. She comes from a family of seven, four boys and three girls, four of the seven are artists.

Baking was an important

function in their household. Her mother made all kinds of cakes and the children experimented extensively with cake-making. She has been baking professionally for about 10 years and started out baking cakes for prisoners. One of the prison employees asked her to bake a cake for a special occasion at the prison. As a result of that cake, she received orders to make many cakes for the prisoners. Her business developed to the point that she was making 250 items a week. She featured 10 different items including cherry pies, pumpkin raisin cake, chocolate chip and oatmeal cookies, chocolate pound cake, banana cake, etc. All the baking was done in her apartment kitchen.

At this point, Renee wants to specialize only with the carrot cakes. They have worked very hard at mastery of carrot cake to achieve the kinds of cakes you

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"eat at Grandma's house." Carrot cake demands a number of ingredients and requires many steps. They have also mastered the gauges on the oven to achieve the perfection she

demand for her cakes.

Renee has a daughter Tanyika Nichole Allen, aged 9. They have lived in Inwood for eight years. She came from Cleveland, Ohio where she was born and raised. She enjoys continuing to learn about New York City. Renee "is intrigued with the neighborhood and thinks that Inwood Hill Park is enchanting, pretty and charming." She believes that the improvements in the housing in the area is a sign of progress for the neighborhood and hopes that people in the community will take more interest in the community.

Renee sells her cakes to delicatessens, bakeries and numerous restaurants on the East Side from the 30's to the 70's.

Thursday is the one day that the bakery is open to retail customers when Carrot Top also features home made hot apple pies each Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. (No preservatives are used in these scrumptious pies; only fresh apples are used, not canned apples.) Renee will consider special orders. You can call her at 569-1532.

Renee has emotions and feelings about her cakes. When she's making a large cake for a special occasion, "I don't relax until that cake is finished and delivered to the customer." No matter how large the cake, she maintains the homestyle quality, one of the unique features of the Carrot-Top cake.