



Rum Cakes
BY KELLI

We put the RUM in SCRUMPTIOUS!

www.RumCakesByKelli.com • kelli@RumCakesByKelli.com
P.O. Box 370075, Denver, CO 80237-0075 • 1.888.339.CAKE (2253)

Kelli R. Kindel, Owner, Chief Sugar Mama

At 5 foot 2 and little more than 100 pounds, you'd never guess that Denver entrepreneur, Kelli Kindel is a giant force to be reckoned with. Kindel is not only a wife and mother, she serves on a charity board and various committees.

Many people know Kindel as the Events Guru. Having owned and operated Kelli Kindel Events, Inc. for more than 15 years, this petite 48-year old dynamo is the go-to-gal for many of Denver's top-fundraisers.

"Customer service and her easy going nature sets Kelli apart from others," says Lola Salazar, president of the Salazar Family Foundation. "She's totally invested in her clients and takes great pride in all of her events."

She and her loyal team of four women, who also office out of their homes, juggle between 15-20 clients, and in any given year, they create, organize and manage anywhere between 20 to 40 of Denver's premiere events.

"Kelli is a wonderful person, with incredible zest for life," says Sage Hospitality President, Walter Isenberg. " While I got to know her as an event planner through my wife's philanthropic work, we soon learned event planning was only one of her many talents.

Turns out baking rum cakes is one of those many talents Isenberg is referring to. Despite the tumultuous economy, and the long hours she puts in at her events business, Kindel was determined to follow her dreams . With a strong belief in herself and the cakes she makes, Kindel launched Rum Cakes By Kelli in February of '09.

"In July 2008, I started planning it. When the economy took a downward turn in the fall I was so far along with it. I decided at that point, we had so much invested in the company, if I stopped I might not get started again. Plus, I knew my yummy rum cakes would practically sell themselves."

Kindel and her husband used money they'd saved to begin the business.

Within four weeks of operating her online and wholesale business, the self-described Chief Sugar Mama had sold more than 500 cakes and had been placed on the menus at JW Marriott's Second Home Kitchen & Bar, Jordan's Bistro and Pub, Lola's Sugar Rush and the Hyatt Regency Denver Convention Center. Her scRUMptious cakes are also currently being test-marketed in Kalamazoo, Michigan at the Wine Loft. You can also stop in and get your sugar fix at local restaurants, Casey's Bistro & Pub and Darcy's Bistro & Pub.

Kindel counts Colorado's First Lady Jeannie Ritter as one of her biggest fans.

"Kelli's cakes are classic... such a welcome treat in a time of excess of other desserts. I served them to my family and friends for the holidays and they were a big hit!"

She's been baking her "yummy rummies" as she calls them, for more than 25-years. She and her dear friend Joan started baking the cakes and other holiday goodies during the holidays to give away as gifts for friends and family.

According to Kindel, "They liked the toffee. They liked the 7-layer bars. They liked the caramel corn and the cookies. But they said they were going to CRY if they didn't get more rum cake. As the years went by, no matter what was going on in our lives, Joan and I got together every December to bake. We refined the rum cake throughout the years."

During the 2007 holidays, the baking buddies began playing with the idea of creating a business and sharing their mouth-watering, buttery rum cakes with the public. Sadly, the story of these two friends takes a tragic turn. Joan was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer shortly after that holiday, and passed away six months later.

"In honor of the friendship we've shared for 25 years, I knew I was going to do something with this," said Kindel. "So here I am now; I don't sell the toffee. I don't sell the 7-layer bars, or the cookies. I sell the rum cakes."

In just a few short months, Kindel's rum cakes began selling like hot cakes. Simultaneously, her events business continued to grow and flourish.

This hard-driven, passionate woman doesn't take her success for granted. "How lucky am I, to have not one, but two awesome businesses thriving despite our economic downturn?"

For such a savvy business woman, it's hard to believe Kindel has no formal business training.

She jokes about growing-up in the small town of Ithaca, Michigan. Population 3,500.

"It used to have a stop light," Kindel says with a grin "Now I think it only has a four-way stop." Kindel was the first one in her immediate family to go to college. She majored in journalism at Central Michigan University. After she graduated, she knew going back to small-town living was not for her.

"I just had to get away!" says Kindel. "I knew there was more out there for me. I'd only traveled to a few places at that point in my life, one of them being Colorado. I fell in love with it! "

With \$500 to her name, and a dream of something bigger than Ithaca, Kindel relocated to Colorado and took a job as a freelance journalist for the Golden Transcript. To make ends meet, she also took a full-time job as an administrative assistant with United Cerebral Palsy (UCP). Six months later, she became their Special Events Coordinator.

"While I was there, I produced one of UCP's 21-hour telethons, which aired on Channel 7," says Kindel. "Somehow I managed to catch the attention of the folks at KMGH, shortly after I found myself at Channel 7 and I eventually became their Community Affairs Director."

In 1986, Kindel was diagnosed with cervical cancer. At the age of 27, she had a radical hysterectomy. She's been cancer free ever since. Not only did she win her battle with cancer, she won the heart of Channel 7's Ray Volkema, who at the time was directing newscasts and special projects.

Kindel lights up when she talks about Volkema. "We each tell a different story about how we actually got together, of course my version is the right one," she says with a laugh. "We were friends for the longest time -- we drifted apart and didn't reconnect until we saw each other at a Nuggets draft party. We started going out, we got engaged and we've been happy together ever since."

That was in 1994, and with the new husband, she inherited 6-year old Lexy. Kindel says they bonded right away.

"We filled a gap for each other. I was unable to have children. Lexy became the daughter I never had. We've become the best of friends."

After devoting her 20's and early 30's to working fast-paced jobs, Kindel wanted a career change. Something that would allow her more time for her new family and to get more involved in Lexy's life. It was time to head down a new path. Of course, this energetic woman had no intention of sitting idle. She got the idea to become an event planner while she was still at KMGH. She needed to hire an outside event planner for the station.

"I couldn't find one anywhere," says Kindel. "That's when I realized I could fill that niche and work out of my home. Lexy wouldn't have to be a latch-key kid and I'd get a chance to get more involved in her life."

Shortly after leaving Channel 7, Kindel started an events business with her friend Mary Klever. They called it Kindel and Klever Events.

"Clever name, huh!" she says with a self-deprecating laugh. "We did great events and we had fun clients, like the Nuggets and the Broncos. It was a hoot!"

Klever eventually returned to her job with the United States Olympic Committee and Kindel started Kelli Kindel Events, Inc. That was 12 1/2 years ago.

She's been going full-throttle ever since. She's up at five in the morning and in the office, down the hall. After a couple hours of work, she often takes a 3-4 mile run. On average, Kindel puts in a minimum of 15 hours of work a day.

"I spend 75 percent of my day in meetings and then I go home and do the work."

This hard-working, fun-loving woman knows she is blessed and is devoted to sharing her time and money.

"I'm a true believer in karma -- what goes around comes around," says Kindel. "I'm a big believer in giving back... How can I not? I have gotten so much from this community."

"Kelli generously puts her heart and soul into everything she does," says Salazar. "She's been a dear friend to me and to the community."

Right now, she serves as Escuela de Guadalupe's developmental co-chair with Salazar. The two are also co-chairing the Rumba at La Rumba, an event at the end of April to benefit Escuela. She's also the board Secretary of Project Pave and involved in the Isenberg Foundation's Concert for Kids' Community Day, which involves hundreds of volunteers doing projects around town.

"I do a lot of work with large non-profits, but I also really love the grass-roots organizations," says Kindel. "Small non-profits really have my heart because they need so much help. We all need to do our part."

It's hard to imagine how Kindel even has time and energy for family and friends. This generous spirit credits her sanity to her husband, who she says grounds her.

"Ray has one level," Kindel says with amusement. "He's the most patient person in the world. I'm the exact opposite. I don't have an ounce of patience, at least with myself. I'm the ultimate perfectionist. I'm constantly evaluating things to make them better... I love troubleshooting."

She also loves to have fun and entertain her friends. Each year, Kindel throws an all-out bash at her home which she calls her "Fun Girls Only Party." There's a different theme every year, entertainment and crazy door prizes.

"It's too funny! It started in 2003 as this little get-together with a few of my girlfriends and now it seems to have taken on a life of its own... I love it! Funny thing is I really don't put much effort at all into it. The idea is for all of us just to get together and have fun. It's a great way to bring together women from all walks of my life," Kindel says with obvious love and devotion to her friends.

Long-time friends like Channel 7 news anchor, Anne Trujillo says the party is so Kelli.

"She says she doesn't plan it very much," Trujillo says with smirk. "Maybe not compared to the large scale events she does for a living, but by anybody else's standards it's perfectly planned. In fact, when I have to come up with a creative idea for an event, Kelli is the first person I call."

According to Trujillo, "Kelli just makes it look easy. She puts her heart into everything she does, and it shows."

"Gathering people together to share laughter and fun is what Kelli does best. I know she believes the older we get, the more important girlfriends become. She loves and cherishes her friends and we adore her right back."

"Kelli is an amazing lady," says Isenberg. "She has a great passion for hospitality -- and rum cake!"

As she bops around town to her favorite AC/DC tunes, it's hard to imagine this high-octane personality ever slowing down.

"Right now there's no stopping me," she says with confidence and determination. "But when all is said and done, I want to know that I followed my dreams and gave it my all."

###