

Girl Scouts' newest cookie, the Toast-Yay!, inspires 2 Lehigh Valley bakers to make sweet creations with a mission

By MOLLY BILINSKI

THE MORNING CALL | FEB 07, 2021



Just hearing Kari Alvaro and Huma Usmani describe the cakes and cupcakes they've created over the past few months featuring a new French toast-inspired Girl Scout cookie is enough to make your stomach growl.

"I always tell people it tastes like an old-fashioned slab of French toast," Alvaro said. "It's not too sweet. ... The cookie adds another element of texture inside the cake."

Usmani spoke of a cinnamon cake with vanilla buttercream and a white chocolate maple ganache drip, topped with cookies.

The two women, each of whom owns and runs her own Lehigh Valley bakery, have partnered with the Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania on the project featuring the Toast-Yay! cookie, which aims to show Scouts that the entrepreneurship skills they're learning selling cookies now can lead to a rewarding, fulfilling and delicious career.

Alvaro, owner of Sweet Girlz, 40 N. Third St. in Easton, created the French Toast-Yay! Cupcake, a play on her already popular French toast flavored cupcake. Usmani, owner of Cake as Canvas, 622 W. Broad St. in Bethlehem, created the Toast-Yay! Cookie Cake.



Huma Usmani, owner of Cake as Canvas, 622 W. Broad St. in Bethlehem, created the Toast-Yay! Cookie Cake, left. Kari Alvaro owner of Sweet Girlz, 40 N. Third St. in Easton, created the French Toast-Yay! Cupcake. (Huma Usmani and Kari Alvaro/(Usmani, Alvaro/Provided))

The bakery partnerships are new this year, following changes to the Girl Scouts' selling tactics that were developed last year during the pandemic.

Depending on local restrictions, in-person sales may be limited, with many girls taking their business virtual through online ordering and contact-free pickup or delivery. The organization has partnered with Grubhub for deliveries, too.

[Coronavirus aside, these Girl Scouts are set on building a dog park and handicap-accessible playground in North Whitehall »](#)

“We’re proud of the resourceful ways Girl Scouts are running their cookie businesses safely and using their earnings to make the world a better place,” interim Girl Scouts of the USA CEO Judith Batty said in a January news release announcing the start of the cookie season. “This season, our girls will continue to exemplify what the cookie program taught them — how to think like entrepreneurs, use innovative sales tactics and pivot to new ways of doing business when things don’t go according to plan.”



Girl Scout's newest cookie, the Toast-Yay! (Girl Scouts of the United States/Los Angeles Times/TNS)

The partnership brought back a taste of much-needed normalcy, Alvaro said, with an emphasis on buying local to help community businesses thrive.

“I think it’s definitely an honor to be a part of it,” she said. “And I think it’s important that you can show kids skills and that a skill as simple as making a cookie or selling a cookie can become a trade you can support your family with.”

[Girl Scouts can expand Salisbury Township camp, but won't have year-round workers, or a trading post »](#)

Because, in the end, it’s not really about the cookies, cakes or cupcakes — it’s about independence, hard work and learning the value of accomplishing a goal.

“It’s very important because it’s more than just a cake. It’s helping these girls learn entrepreneurial skills,” Usmani said.

[\[More Entertainment\] Valentine’s Day dining: More than 35 Lehigh Valley area restaurants offering sweet deals for sweethearts »](#)

Looking for Girl Scout cookies? Go to www.gsep.org/en/cookies/find-cookies.html.

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