

## Lisa Yockelson – Baker Extraordinaire!

Describing D.C. baker Lisa Yockelson as a genius might sound overstated. But, in truth, she is one of the country's most notable baking experts — author of several prize-winning baking books and with a small army of devout baking followers. Wondering how she develops her outstanding recipes is a puzzle, indicating that her mind races from one batch of dough to the next cake batter without a pause.

### When and how did Yockelson begin her baking career?

“It seems that my baking career began when I was seven years old, with my late paternal grandmother Lillian Yockelson's brownie recipe in hand. It was a beloved family sweet, and it became the basis for the first essay of mine titled ‘Brownies: A Memoir,’ which was published in *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*. Initially, I baked at the elbows of my late mother and grandmother while standing on a pink step-stool, but I soon took over the mixer, while simultaneously filling my own file box full of recipes. The memories connected with their love of baking are the ever-present touchstones to my work.”

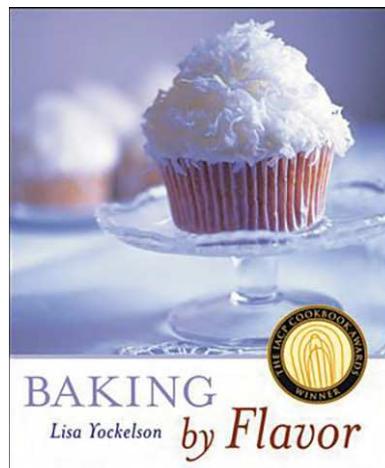
“The recipes that captured my attention in the past continue to inspire me today,” she continues, “including pound cakes, layer cakes, sheet cakes, Bundt cakes, all kinds of drop and bar cookies, and quick breads galore. My affection also extends to rustic tarts, sweet and savory yeast breads, and — one among many compelling flavors — chocolate.”

### As the years passed...

...Yockelson expanded her areas of interest in order to explore new and more challenging techniques. “I bake almost all the time! I frequently bake for pleasure, especially if I suddenly have a craving for, say, a brownie!” she laughs. “My baking schedule varies based on active on-going or future projects or articles. While working on *Baking by Flavor*, I was asked to bake-and-style recipes for an interior photo insert — and so added another ingredient to my work in the field. Presentation was — and is — important to my baking, and this special craft began as a kind of on-the-job-training. It has continued ever since then.”

### Advising others...

Because of her affinity for baking and her willingness to help aspiring bakers and home cooks, Yockelson is happy to provide guidance. “A range of bakers have been in touch — professional/catering, home/avocational, as well as those interested in bringing their baking work into a commercial setting. I encourage aspiring professional bakers to develop their own expertise in the field with this advice: bake, bake, bake! Also, create signature items, even if it is only one confection, such as a particular cookie or cake. Engaging in a classroom or in-the-field apprenticeship would be a



James Beard Foundation/KitchenAid cookbook award in the baking category.

For all aspiring and even accomplished bakers, the best addition to a cookbook library would be at least one of the following: *Baking by Flavor*, *Baking Style: Art Craft Recipes*, and/or *Chocolate Chocolate*, in addition to smaller single subject volumes found by searching online. And

valuable tool,” she continues. “I answer baking-related questions and/or curiosities. Over time, I have informally put together focus groups of all ages and expertise to understand what cooks are interested in and actually baking or purchasing commercially. Conversations are individual and name-anonymous.”



Chocolate — one of Lisa Yockelson's favorite flavors.

### Spreading the baking word...

To date, Yockelson has authored numerous articles with recipes that have appeared in publications such as *Cook's Illustrated*, *Gourmet*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Chocolatier, Pastry Art & Design*, the food pages of *The Washington Post* and *The Boston Globe*, and *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*. She is also the author of numerous baking books, three of which have received IACP awards, and include two nominations for a

for anyone who loves chocolate, especially a chocolate fudgy brownie, make up a batch or two of her “Essence of Chocolate Squares” (pgs. 282-283) from *Baking by Flavor*. These yummy sweets have a dense fudgy flavor with a chocolate frosting on top. Yockelson says that this is among her most requested recipes. And we can guess why!

Interested bakers may tweet Yockelson for short answers at Lisa Yockelson (@sweetpinkbaker).