



## Farm Market Maven Graduates to Brick and Mortar



“I work 120 hours a week,” says Jennifer Brown. “But it feels like only 90!” The baker, package wrapper, deliverer, bookkeeper, and dishwasher of Cupcakes Lounge seems to have unlimited energy and simply loves what she does. And, as she will happily explain, her baking business is the realization of her dreams.

A resident of Montgomery County who moved east from Southern California, Brown is a 2003 graduate of L’Academie de Cuisine in Gaithersburg. Her route to the baking business took her through several part-time jobs, all of which were somehow related to the food industry — opening up a Trader Joe’s and working as a server, for example. “I always loved food and feeding people, so making food and providing it is something that just warms me.” Plus, she laughs, “I loved watching The Food Network on television!”

### In 2010...

...after taking business courses at Montgomery College, she started her own company, Cupcakes Lounge. “At first,” she said, “I did catering and made wedding cakes. Then I started selling at local farmers markets in Olney and Kentlands.”

By 2013, Brown was selling at six farmers markets, but she still had a goal to open own brick and mortar place. “I had the energy to keep going because I am working towards something.” And she pointed out that opening her own bakery will allow her to work with her own ovens, instead of renting kitchen space to do her baking.

### A space and a place

Fortunately, Brown found not only an affordable empty warehouse in Rockville but an agreeable architect who put a plan in place. “But turning a warehouse into a food-safe place has been a bit over my head,” she said. Remaking the warehouse into a bakery took longer than expected.



Owner and pastry chef Jennifer Brown pauses during the build-out of Cupcakes Lounge

“The architects took 14 months to present plans to the county and for the approval. You have to get all

approved beforehand, and then you can start getting bids from builders.” But Brown now has the space, the kitchen is built out, and she has the keys in hand. All that’s left is installing the equipment, a few more permits, and the decorating.

### But until the official early 2018 opening...

...Brown will keep baking, baking, baking. Of course, customers have their favorites, and not surprisingly, the most popular goodies are the fresh blueberry, raspberry, and banana nut breads. “In every single blueberry loaf,” she said, “I place the blueberries in by hand. It’s got to be done right so the berries are evenly distributed and do not sink to the bottom of the loaf.”

Besides the bread — for which she has recipes for 70 different flavors — Brown has an extensive line of baked goods, including cupcakes, pies, macaroons, cake pops, bread puddings, cakes, cookies, cheesecakes, brownies... and the list goes on. No wonder that at the various farmers markets she attends, she always has something new for sale. “I make 3,000 to 3,500 items weekly,” she said. “And that does not include wedding and birthday cakes or my catering business.”

Brown is thrilled that her cupcakes were voted #1 in Montgomery County last year, and she said it’s that kind of success that keeps her going. Her fans can only hope she always has the energy to bake, bake, bake. Jennifer Brown, <http://www.cupcakeslounge.com>, 12968 Pinnacle Drive, Germantown, MD 20874.

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