

SusieCakes' New Preston Center Location Brings Retro Sweets into a New Era

BY BETH RANKIN

FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2016 AT 4 A.M.



This marbled cake shows off one of the key tenets of SusieCakes: equal distribution of frosting. Frosting socialism, if you will.

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Susan Sarich says she fell in love with Dallas immediately. She loves it so much, in fact, that the owner of California bakery chain SusieCakes is house-hunting here while she opens the bakery's first location outside of Cali, on a bustling corner of Preston Center.

"The neighborhood here has a sense of community," she says. "This whole center has a really good vibe of just people doing their everyday stuff."

SusieCakes opens Saturday with daylong festivities including a DJ, kids' activities and drawings for desserts. And kids will probably be big fans of this place: SusieCakes menu revolves around layer cakes, cupcakes and treats like iced molasses cookies and lemon squares. But there's good reason for adults to dig it, too. SusieCakes specializes in made-from-scratch desserts with no artificial preservatives or high-fructose corn syrup. Her cakes, which can be ordered by the slice, look modern and trendy – in the case you'll spot ombré treats and faded pastel blue cakes in a color she calls "Susie Blue" – but are made using decidedly old-school methods.



The new SusieCakes opens Saturday in Preston Center. It's small but adorable – just as a bakery should be.

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"If it wasn't in the kitchen in 1950, we don't use it," Sarich says. The basic recipes, although modified for scale, came largely from her grandmothers.

"For me, it's not about trends – it's about back to basics," Sarich says, noting that you won't find trendy ingredients like candied ginger or lavender

oil in her cakes. One thing she can get behind: Even distribution of frosting, as evidenced by the many frosted layers in her cakes. That philosophy extends to her cupcakes, which feature a dollop of frosting injected into the middle of the cupcake. Even with all that frosting, there's something notable about these cakes: They're not as cloyingly sweet as you'd expect.

Take, for instance, SusieCakes' flagship sweet: the Vanilla Celebration Cake, a six-layer vanilla cake flecked with sugar confetti and swathed in Susie Blue icing. In a shop like this, it may come as a surprise that the most beloved treat is a vanilla cake – but one bite of this cute confection and you'll know exactly why. Sarich uses super high-quality butter and vanilla, she says, and the result is a completely addictive cake that tastes like your grandmother's kitchen smelled while she was baking – warm, buttery, comforting, the smell of vanilla permeating everything. It's a cake so simple and beautifully executed, it feels revolutionary, despite its retro qualities.

SusieCakes' Preston Center spot will serve Cultivar coffee and take orders for custom cakes. Mini cupcakes run \$1.95 each, full-size frosting-filled cupcakes are \$3.50, a slice of cake is \$6.25 and a whole 6-inch cake is \$36, with the 9-inch coming in at \$49. Sarich is hoping North Texans will take to her cakes like Cali has. As dessert trends come and go, she's sticking with the way her grandmothers did things.

"It's really, for me, very personal," she says.

SusieCakes, 6100 Luther Lane, open 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday.