



Business

# ‘Pookie Crack Cakes’: The Family Business That Has Everyone Hooked

Nicole Joseph  
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*Dedra Simmons’ passion for baking birthed Pookie Crack Cakes, a Bronzeville bakery where cakes fly off the shelves (Credit, Nicole Joseph).*

There’s this saying that goes, “It’s so good it makes you want to slap your momma!”

At Pookie Crack Cakes, while the cakes slap, another kind of “slapping” also happens: cakes flying off the shelves, only to be put back onto the shelves again and selling out daily.

When Dedra Simmons started her bakery in 2014, it was a labor of love. A business birthed out of her home that was a passion as she maintained her day job in the pharmaceutical industry. Given the positive response Simmons was receiving from her cakes, she knew she had something special as the demand for her sweet cakes “grew more and more!” she said.

Shundell Johnson, Simmons’s brother-in-law, reminisces on their humble beginnings: “It’s a remarkable feeling, coming from a small apartment, where the kitchen was no bigger than a bathroom. To come from that to where we are now is a huge accomplishment. We’re here now, and we’re going to be here for a while!”

Just as the cakes gained popularity, so did their name.

Some questioned, “Why the name?”

But Simmons stands on the importance of celebrating nostalgia while giving the people what they want.

***The cakes were said to be so good that people were addicted. Plus, “Pookie is a term of endearment,” Simmons said. From this, “Pookie Crack Cakes” was born. “It’s attention-grabbing. Now that I have your attention, come get some of this cake!” she said.***

## Flavors Upon Flavors

With so many tasty options, customers are often in a dilemma when deciding which flavor to try first. So, when choosing between the butter pecan praline, red velvet, strawberry lemonade, chocolate Oreo dream, peach crack cobbler, pineapple paradise, caramel, key lime or lemon, they often leave with more than one.



## A Business That Is Family First

In a time when people refrain from working with family members, Simmons is embracing it. She takes pride in paying her family well as they build an empire together. Simmons recognizes that she cannot do this alone, so having her family’s support is essential. They all work together to ensure each one makes it, achieves their dreams, and thrives.

Dedra Simmons is the owner and main baker. Douglass Simmons, her husband, is the “husband-ger” or the co-owner who is also pivotal in sales, marketing, promotion and community engagement.

Sharon Simmons McGee, their mother, works in any and every capacity to ensure the business runs smoothly.

She’s the oil in the well-oiled machine, Simmons says.

Johnson, aka “Mitch on the Move,” is the brother responsible for sales, new business, the street team, and B2B and B2C relationships. Their daughter, Jasmine Biles, is the co-baker and maker of three of their signature glazes.

As a family-owned business, it’s been created as a well-oiled machine with everyone working skillfully in their space. They work well independently and together.

With the support of her family, Simmons has experienced continuous growth, leading to their first brick-and-mortar bakery on 47th Street in Bronzeville.

## Cakes That ‘Sell Out Fast’

Pookie Crack Cakes sells about 600 cakes each day. The mother-daughter duo of Simmons and Biles preps, mixes and bakes all of the cakes. This 12-14-hour commitment is on top of working regular store hours.

People travel far and wide, internationally and domestically, to get their taste of their delicious cakes. Unlike commercial shops, at Pookies Crack Cakes, this duo’s hands make the magic happen.

One challenge is when cakes are in high demand and sell out fast. Not having a commercial bakery, the family-owned business is doing its best to satisfy its customers.

They hope to one day expand to provide more cakes to those in the community. They want to give everyone a chance to experience the addicting deliciousness of their cakes.

# Promoting Other Black Businesses



Simmons understands that her brand garners a lot of attention. She also understands that as she scales up, it’s imperative to use that attention to support other Black businesses. As a result, she sells Lena’s Sweet Tea and Keys Kreations famous cookies at her bakery.

She also promotes many brands on their social media pages, bringing awareness to other organizations, their successes and the changes those brands are making in the community.

## More Than Just Cakes: Dinners and Lemonades

The employees or family members at Pookie Crack Cakes look forward to expanding by creating their own unique brands. Visitors to the bakery can expect to receive Sunday Dinners from Biles featuring her famous jerk chicken, gouda mac and cheese, greens, wings, string beans and a free slice of cake.

They can also expect Johnson’s exotic lemonades, including flavors like berry hibiscus, peach mango, watermelon green apple and pina colada pineapple.

## A Typical Day At Pookie Crack Cakes

At Pookie Crack Cakes, the line starts to form well before doors open. The first ticket is given out at 10 a.m. for the 11 a.m. store opening.

While waiting, patrons can ponder the deliciousness of this so-called “crack” cake, which “is nothing but a bundt cake.” When the cracks form at the top, you poke holes in it, pour butter rum glaze, and let it seep into the cake,” said Simmons.

It’s a “moist, delicious, premium, homemade cake made fresh daily,” she said.

“One bite, and you’re addicted!”

## About Post Author



### Nicole Joseph

Nicole Joseph is a multimedia journalist with the Chicago Defender. Her work has also appeared in BlackDoctor.org. As an accomplished integrated marketing communications strategist, she excels in marketing, social media, communications, media, and public relations. Driven by a deep passion for storytelling, Nicole masterfully leverages journalism, filmmaking, and marketing communications to craft compelling narratives across various platforms. She holds multiple journalism certificates, an MS in Integrated Marketing Communications from Roosevelt University, and a BS in Sales & Marketing from Tuskegee University.

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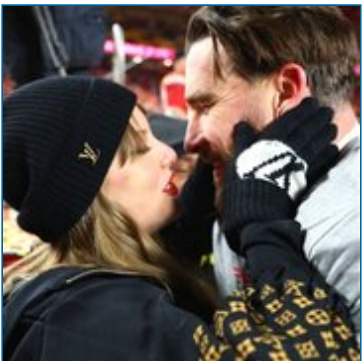
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