

## ENTREPRENEURIAL EATS

### Baking the Best

Whether it's the hard work ethic or just good ole Yankee ingenuity, there's something about Maine that has made it home to some of the nation's best specialty desserts. Some of these entrepreneurial bakers have even moved out of their home kitchens and into the national limelight.

Most famous is the mother-daughter team of Simply Divine Brownies in Brunswick. Trina and Meggen Beaulier are leaders in the gourmet brownie world, dishing up their heavenly treats for Al Roker on NBC's *Today Show*, Rachel Ray on CBS, and Academy Awards parties.

Fame hasn't changed them, though: their brownies are still crafted with "love, laughter, and confection," their business mantra.

Homemade from high-quality ingredients, hand-dipped in chocolate, and topped off with caramel, peanut butter, or even Wild Turkey bourbon, these brownies are so good that people as far as Bangkok are placing orders, and New York socialites serve them at dinner parties.

"There's something magical about brownies," mother Trina says. "They just always attract people."

At Cranberry Island Kitchen in Cumberland, best friends Karen Haase and Carol Ford capitalize on their Maine roots by turning the state's delicious seafood into whimsical desserts. Little Cranberry Island,

where they've been vacationing and baking together for years, was their source of inspiration.

"We wanted to give people a sense of a small Maine island through our recipes," Ford says.

Their "Crazy Clam" buttermilk cake comes from a 100-year-old island recipe known as "white gingerbread," even though there's no ginger in it. Their "Maypole Mussel Whoopie Pie" is named after a spot on the island where Ford and Haase harvest real mussels.

The hardest part was turning Maine's iconic crustacean into the "Lucky Lobster" shortbread cookie. "If we had a nickel for every time a person asked us how we got the lobster in the package..." says Ford.

For Marnee Robinson, owning her own cookie business was a cosmic calling. Call it "Serendipity," "Kismet," or "Destiny," but it's no coincidence that the owner of Marnee's Cookies in Bath was born on National Cookie Day, December 4, or that her cookies bear such providential names.

Robinson's 17 varieties of thin, crunchy-but-chewy cookies pack a lot of taste, "because life is simply too short to eat a bad cookie," as her slogan goes.

"Maine breeds an entrepreneurial spirit," Robinson says. "That there are the best brownies and the best cookies next door to each other—there's something to be said for that."

—Mindy Favreau

*A peanut butter brownie crafted by Simply Divine Brownies in Brunswick.*