

DUTTONS

THE CAKE ELEMENT BAKERY



**The sweet taste of
success for husband
-and-wife bakers**

A MOTHER-of-one who swapped clay for sugar paste is tasting sweet success with her cake business.

Michelle Siedler, who runs The Cake Element in Bampton, has baked hundreds of beautiful cakes for weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, christenings and other special occasions.

The delicately and intricately iced cakes wowing customers tap into her skills as an artist.

Michelle, who has 20 years' experience in clay modelling, ran a successful studio back in Brazil where she's originally from.

While working as a housekeeper here in Oxfordshire, she realised how much she missed clay modelling and decided to try her hand at working with sugar paste.

A course at The Squires Kitchen Bakery School in Surrey taught her how to decorate cakes with sugar paste icing.

She explained: "I came home from that course and told my husband Ivan I was going to give it a go. It's so funny, because I remember saying: 'How busy can we be? We'll probably only sell one cake every three months.'"

She added: "Actually, what happened was we kept selling more and more cakes, until it took over my life."

As the orders poured in, Michelle, who was in a housekeeping job and Ivan, who was working in a local factory, put in eight or nine-hour days before going home and staying up until 1am baking and decorating.

At one point, Michelle thought she would have to stop taking orders because she just didn't have enough time to make more cakes



But Ivan, who'd never baked in his life, suggested she teach him.

Now, Michelle says, her husband has turned out to be a better baker than she is.

She pointed out: "Ivan is very good at maths, so in five seconds he does all the calculations for recipes that would take me two days."

She added: "He just knows how things

react with other things when I have no clue.

"I put it all together and it explodes, I don't know why."

Eventually, Michelle started to dream about opening their own cake shop.

She explained: "When I mentioned my idea to Ivan, he thought I was crazy as we didn't have the money to do it but I nestered him until he gave in."

Spotting a vacant shop in Bampton's High Street, they realised it would make the perfect spot for a bakery shop and café and opened for business seven months ago.

As a trained and experienced barista who worked in coffee shops when younger, Ivan tends to spend most days in the café while Michelle works from the family home, also in Bampton.

Customers rave about their homemade Brazilian custard tarts known as pastel de nata, Brazilian doughnuts, cupcakes, scones, cookies, pastries and bread the couple bake and serve in their café

Michelle said: "It has been amazing and we love it but it's not a fairytale, it's hard work."

Baking runs in her family, as both her grandmothers were pastry chefs.

Following in these floury footsteps, their 10-year-old daughter Liv is already part of the business, helping at cupcake decorating parties, in the café and on stalls at food festivals.

The couple say the key to a delicious cake is in using the best ingredients and wherever possible, they opt for local suppliers such as Matthews flour, Mayfield eggs at Barnard Gate near Witney and UE coffee, also Witney based.

As well as all the special occasion cakes and café, Michelle runs cake decorating workshops and parties for children and adults, something she would love to do more of.

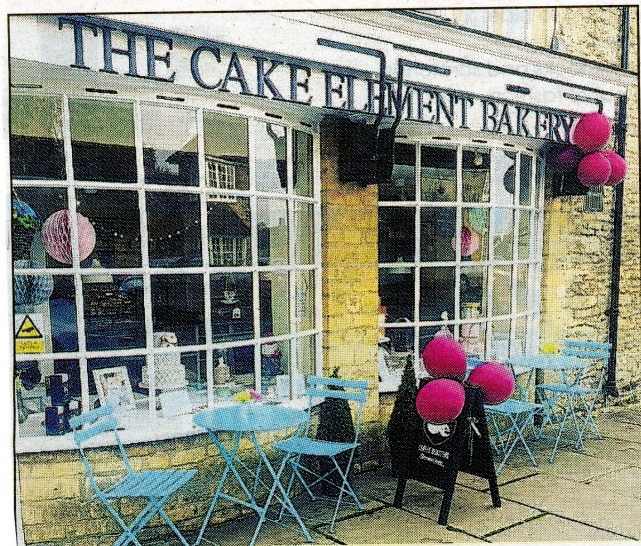
She said: "I love teaching and empowering people to change their life, just like I did with mine."

Despite the old saying about too many cooks, the couple don't argue over the cake mix.

"We are very different, but we have a great relationship and I think that's why it works," Michelle joked.

● For more information see cakeelementbakery.co.uk









PERFECT TEAM: Michelle and Ivan Siedler, left, and daughter Liv; some of the tempting treats on offer at The Cake Element in Bampton