

THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2009

Maribelle Cakery now kosher

by **Avi Milgrom**
Assistant Editor

Maribelle cakery now offers kosher dairy and pareve cakes, having moved into a vacuum in the kosher baked goods market created by the exit of Artrageous Desserts.

The owners, husband and wife Larry Brown and Tina Gutierrez bought the 19-year-old business six years ago from a friend who was moving out of town — a consequence of getting married. As owners of the European Bridal Shop, they were already versed in the business of helping couples make the big leap.

Asked about the effect of the

recession on business, Gutierrez answered, “I don’t see a big slowdown in weddings. Even though people are cutting back, there are many more weddings.”

She is noticing changes in her customers, however.

Citing market research studies, Gutierrez explained that the younger generation now getting married grew up with media programs on fashion, food and home decorating and want good quality products — for which they know prices.

Also, couples are getting married at an older age. So they can contribute to wedding costs to get something special.

The average wedding in

Cincinnati, according to Gutierrez, costs \$28,000. Wedding cakes at Maribelle are high end, around \$1,000.

With artisans on staff supervised by her husband, who was a luthier of historical musical instruments in his former professional life, Maribelle targets the discriminating consumer.

As a couple, explained Gutierrez, the arts are very important. Their bakery is one expression of this passion.

Where is the industry headed? For wedding cakes, traditional flavors such as white chocolate or butter cream for multi-layer cakes

cupcakes. “Cupcakes are huge — a trend that started with Martha Stewart,” explained Gutierrez.

Making cakes for all occasions, their pareve selection

includes “Dark Chocolate with Localuha and Truffle filling” and “Lemon Paradise with Lemon tart and Coconut filling.”

Leaving their shop in the

bridal district of Reading, Ohio, after work, Gutierrez comes home to three stepkids and two cats.

Raised on a farm that grew corn, soybean and boarded

horses, Gutierrez cautioned that city folks might think she lacks sophistication if that detail is let out.

She’s got a point. They might. So let them eat cake!

MARIBELLE from page 15

are most favored. For party cakes chocolate is king.

A hot trend that has been building for some five years is