

# Salute to Commerce – The Cake Lady

By Courtney Linville | Bend Chamber



It's a name synonymous with perfection, beauty, and quality ... The Cake Lady at The Cake Lady Shoppe. Ask any Central Oregonian and more than likely they have tasted the moist cake and incredible flavors created by mother-daughter owners Linda Hickman and Deanna Kinsey.

What started out as a hobby and passion in 1966, would soon turn into a full-fledged career for Hickman. She started experimenting with cakes and cake decorating in 1966 by taking night classes in cake decorating while she was going to school at Oregon State University and teaching during the day. "I wanted to do something fun at night, so I started going to decorating classes," she said.

When she and her husband moved to Ashland, Hickman decided to make a cake for the local church. But this wasn't an ordinary cake; it was actually shaped and decorated like the church itself! After that, members of the congregation started coming up to Hickman and asking her

to create cakes for weddings and other events.

It was an immediate learning curve for Hickman as she figured out how to make large tiered wedding cakes and other creations. For nearly 10 years, Hickman is proud to say she did the majority of the wedding cakes in both Ashland and part of Medford. When her family had the opportunity to move to Bend, she trained another person to take over her business.

"I was born and raised on a ranch in Prineville, so moving back here was like coming back home," said Hickman. "I would tutor for the local school district during the day and at night I would make cakes."

But as word grew and more orders for cakes came in, Hickman realized she needed more time in the kitchen. Her daughter Deanna worked a full-time job, but would also help out with cake orders after work. "She and I would do the work at night to meet the growing demand," she said. "Finally, we decided we both had to stop working our other jobs and concentrate on the cake business."

Once Hickman and Kinsey started working full time, they were making close to 150 wedding cakes a year, and they haven't looked back since. Hickman says the last time she counted the company was up to at least 200 wedding cakes a year, 1,100 birthday and anniversary cakes, 2,000 mini cakes, and an unknown number of cupcakes.

With 22 different cake flavors ranging from classic to gourmet to decadent and a multitude of choices for filling and icing, The Cake Lady offers something for every palette. "We make sure to have four layers of cake and three layers of filling when we create our cakes, this way you will have a forkful of both cake and filling," said Hickman. "It's incredibly moist, and it will just melt in your mouth."

She is quick to point out all fruit fillings are made from real fruit, and her butter cream frosting is real butter cream. And don't forget to try The Cake Lady's homemade biscotti, cupcakes, or cake truffles!

Hickman and Kinsey moved to their current location in 2008 and opened up a new side to the business that includes a coffee shop offering Italian espresso and coffee drinks, dining tables, couches, wifi and a meeting room. "We can have group parties here, several organizations in town use our back meeting room, and we even have college students that come in to study because it's quiet," says Hickman.

After 46 years in the business and 36 years in Bend, Hickman says she still loves what she does! “We make so many people happy and they are just delighted,” she said. “People know their order will be done right because we are picky and perfectionists, and we don’t mess around.”

Hickman and Kinsey also continue to work on their craft and are often tested when customers bring in photos or ideas they have seen on popular television shows like Cake Boss or high-end cakes from magazines. “We do our best to accommodate whatever the customer asks of us, we will do it to perfection,” said Hickman.

What many Central Oregonians may not know is The Cake Lady has such a great reputation, the business even receives calls from customers all over the U.S. and internationally! Just last year, Hickman said she received a call from a customer out of Thailand that was coming to Central Oregon. “People find us, they read about us, and they realize our work is awesome,” she laughed. “We have two wedding coming out of India this year.”

Hickman and Kinsey agree they love living in Bend and being a part of the community. The Cake Lady is very passionate about helping children in the community and donates cakes to a variety of causes for raffles and more. The business donates to local public, Christian, and private schools as well as the community college. Cakes and more have also been donated to help the Girl Scouts, Sparrow Club, Boys and Girls Club, Bethlehem Inn, Humane Society, Grandma’s House, and more raise money. Hickman also points out the business supports smaller community groups as well that focus on children.

She says it’s important for businesses to give back because people will remember those businesses and will go back to frequent those businesses. “Give and you shall receive,” she said. “If you do something good, people will talk a little bit, and that’s wonderful.”

The Cake Lady is honored to be this month’s Salute to Commerce winner. “It’s wonderful to receive this recognition because it displays those businesses that have been a benefit to the community,” Hickman said. “We have been here for 36 years and we are truly blessed.”

*The Salute to Commerce Program is sponsored by Combined Communications Inc., The Riverhouse, and the Bend Chamber of Commerce. Congratulations to the past year’s Salute to Commerce recipients for making Bend a better place to live: Niswonger-Reynolds Funeral Home, Rod Wigle, MD, Avion Water Company Inc, Arbor Mortgage Group, Round Butte Seed Growers, Inc, Touchmark at Mt. Bachelor Village, Bend River Promenade, Integra Telecom Inc., Bend Burger Company, Standard TV & Appliance, OnPoint Community Credit Union, and Bend Mailing Services.*