

The sweet spot



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With more than 30 years in business, The Candy Lady creates wedding cakes that cater to customer desires

By **Charlotte Mitchell**

Debbie Ball's candy career in Albuquerque spans more than 30 years. **The Candy Lady**, Ball's charming shop on the northwest corner of Old Town Plaza, is famous for its vast assortment of handmade candy, including chocolate-dipped strawberries, coconut bonbons and licorice rock candy, to name just a few.



Photo By Wes Naman

The Candy Lady is infamous for its popular X-rated goods, including cakes resembling parts of the male and female anatomy, which make a memorable gift for your sweetie on Valentine's Day. These confections received much media coverage in the early '80s, when North Valley churchgoers picketed in front of the store.

In recent years the shop has been featured on the *Food Network's*, "Secret Life of ... Southwestern Food" segment, *Frommer's* and *Orbitz* travel guides recommend The Candy Lady, *Yahoo! Travel* recommends the shop, and *USA Today* listed The Candy Lady as one of the "10 great places to hit your sweet spot for Easter" in 2009.

The beginning of the year is prime time for wedding planning. Happy couples are preparing for the popular summer wedding by attending wedding shows and sifting through publications in search of ideas, particularly cake ideas. For those lucky enough to live in New Mexico, The Candy Lady is a flexible cake-making source.

Ball will replicate the look of any wedding cake a bride has in mind. "They tend to bring in pictures from the Internet, books or magazines," she stated in a recent interview with *Local IQ*. However, Ball urges couples to order something slightly different so they can have an original. If a couple has no idea what to serve their guests, they can turn to a three-ring binder packed with pictures of cakes the shop has created over the years.

Many times, a bride will pick out a cake and match it to her wedding colors. Ball's wedding cakes are chocolate, white or spice, with a fresh whipped cream topping. Also, each tier can be a different flavor. For guests on a special diet, Ball will even make a sugar-free tier. She works with couples on budgets, and couples with out-of-the-box ideas.

One couple loved the TV show *The Simpsons* (so much so, that the bride had a Homer tattoo on her arm, and the groom had a Marge tattoo on his arm). It was a must for them to incorporate this cartoon in their wedding. Homer and Marge cake toppers were placed on the wedding cake, along with a groom's cake that looked like a jelly doughnut with Homer's face in the middle.

This year, patrons have requested *Día de los Muertos*-themed goods, so bride and groom skeleton cake toppers dressed in vivid color are created. Although most requests are not only doable but welcomed, Ball remembers a couple who wanted a cake with black icing. She refused to do it because she didn't want the guests, not to mention the bride and groom, to walk around the reception with black lips from the food coloring.

Ball takes pride in her work and delivers the cakes herself. She ices the cake the morning of the wedding, and adds the flowers and other decoration right before the reception. She believes the cake is a major focal point at any wedding, and if, "I feel that the setting for the cake is not acceptable, I will do everything I can to make it right in order to showcase my work," Ball said.

With such flexibility, customer service and pride in a job well done — not to mention the decades of experience in serving happy customers — you can't go wrong stopping by The Candy Lady when planning your dream day.

Debbie Ball

The Candy Lady

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