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Clarkson, McEntire hit it off

Original Idol sees country matriarch as role model, 1-2D

Duo: Reba McEntire and Kelly Clarkson

By Michael Fitzpatrick, USA TODAY



By Jack Gribben, USA TODAY

Cupcakes runneth over: Sophia Miranda, 4, eyes the goods at Kara's Cupcakes in San Francisco. Sophia and mom Carolyn came in from suburban Tiburon, Calif.

Pretty treats take the cake

Cupcake-only bakeries find success catering to the kid in all of us

By Marco R. della Cava
USA TODAY

SAN FRANCISCO — Kara's Cupcakes is a deliciously subversive little enterprise.

Set on the site of a former workout studio, the bakery seduces shoppers with its jewelry-like confections, \$3 frosted hand grenades capable of detonating any diet.

"It seems there's been a line from the day we opened," says a still-incredulous Kara Haspel Lind, a onetime magazine advertising sales rep, who, along with her United Airlines pilot husband Michael, started Kara's Cupcakes last fall. "This dessert is timeless."

And increasingly ubiquitous.

New York's Magnolia Bakery, whose cupcakes were lionized seven years ago on HBO's *Sex and the*

City, may be this trend's granddaddy, but its offspring are spreading throughout the land.

Whether it's Kara's conquering of the Bay Area, a growing cupcake chain in glitzy Los Angeles or the one-woman operation in historic Charleston, S.C., the venerable cupcake is making its buttercream-fueled stand. If you're looking for explanations, consult your head before your stomach.

"The rise of the cupcake is very much about going back to our national identity in food, which is all about comfort," says Ruth Reichl, editor of *Gourmet* magazine. "In these times fraught with war and a tough economy, people want to think about when they and their country were innocent."

Reichl knows firsthand the power of the cupcake. Two years ago, *Gourmet* innocently showcased

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story

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