

# the cupcake comeback

They may be tiny but the presence of cupcakes at any party packs some serious punch, writes **Katrina Meynink**.

**ONCE THE** darling of fundraisers and childhood birthday parties, the cupcake has recently and quite visibly ascended to red carpet celebrity status. No longer a frivolous mix of batter, frosting and sprinkles, this little cake is now the popular fodder of the fashion-conscious.

Amazingly, the cupcake has graced our stomachs since the late 18th Century. The name is said to have originated from the imperial measurement of ingredients used to make it – a cup of flour, a cup of butter, a cup of sugar, all baked in... cups or cup-shaped moulds.

There is something teensily spectacular and definitely enduring about the cupcake. Aside from the immediate comfort factor it brings, it is the labourious care in baking, the perfect sponge-to-icing ratio, its portability, and the fact that its construction does not lend kindly to sharing. Perfect!

They are art. They are fashion. From Magnolia in New York to Hummingbird Bakery on Portobello Road, London, the cupcake has firmly established itself as a global food phenomenon.

Bakers and devotees alike agree this

swelling resurgence in popularity fulfils an infantile fantasy of whimsical childhood parties wreathed with sugar-frosted havoc.

Owner of local deli Tognini's, Narelle Tognini, says between her Milton and Spring Hill stores, staff lovingly hand over more than 10 dozen cupcakes a week. Such is the obsession with its white chocolate-based cupcake that passionate addicts often phone ahead, placing them on hold.

Whatever the fix, the humble cc is nudging richer-style cakes from the display cabinet

"The cupcake has nostalgic appeal, with some customers deliberating quite seriously about which pastel coloured cake will grace their plates, with pink being a steadfast favourite," Narelle said.

For others it is the desire to romanticise the idea of the alpha-housewife (read Bree Van De Kamp of *Desperate Housewives*) – the cut and thrust of recipe exchange with your neighbour and the long term lending

of whisks or anything that lends itself to kneading, blending or baking.

Or is this newfound fame a return to comfort food in an increasingly uncomfortable world? Is it an outright objection to the torturous carb-free Atkins Diet or is it merely an idle means to fill the obvious void left by the stiletto-clad girls of *Sex and the City*?

Whatever the fix, the humble cc is nudging richer-style cakes from the display cabinet; weddings and cocktail parties are just as likely to be catered with champagne and cupcakes as the obligatory canapés and hors d'oeuvres.

These little beauties might be small but the hype is huge and they are bound to feed the stomach and fuel the soul for sometime yet.

## Brisbane's Best

In your quest to find the best made-with-love cupcake you cannot go past:

- Cream Patisserie, Coorparoo
- Jocelyn's Provisions, New Farm
- Tognini's Milton and Spring Hill
- Vanilla Pod Café and Deli, Ascot



A colourful arrangement of cupcakes from Vanilla Pod