



Tribune photo by Michael Budrys

Cindy Ousterhout says her whimsical creations start with a basic butter cookie.

## A cookie business shapes up

Cindy Ousterhout remembers her first assignment as a cookie entrepreneur: eight dozen tea cookies for a friend's party. Four years and more than 250,000 cookies later (give or take a few thousand), Ousterhout, of Lake Forest, claims Neiman Marcus and Sunset Foods as clients.

The business has grown, and the cookies have changed too. Ousterhout's company, O My Goodness!, specializes in whimsical, beautifully decorated cookies that commemorate holidays and special occasions in original ways. A recent assignment: purple footballs to celebrate Northwestern University's Rose Bowl appearance.

"It's a pretty basic butter cookie, really," Ousterhout says, noting that Madagascar bourbon vanilla is probably the most distinctive ingredient. "We tell how business has grown by how many gallons of vanilla we've bought in a year." (She used 4 gallons last year.)

Another integral ingredient is the menagerie of cookie-cutters custom-made for her by neighbor Bart Woloson, who makes them in his spare time.

One of Ousterhout's first commercial accounts was Foodstuffs in Evanston and Glencoe. "We're a store that looks for uniqueness," said Foodstuffs general manager Michael Greene. "Her cookies have a visual appeal to customers, as well as a taste appeal."

Ousterhout's valentine cookies—delicate pink, red and white hearts as well as love letters—are currently taking center stage. O My Goodness! cookies cost \$3 to \$4 each. In addition to the aforementioned stores, they are sold at Don's Finest Foods in Lake Forest; Bittersweet and Spoonful in Chicago; and Song of Sixpence in Winnetka. Nordstrom is carrying the Valentine cookies. Ousterhout makes custom orders too. Call 847-735-9890.

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