

# CUPCAKES MARK THE SPOT

By Laura Reiley  
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Babycakes was taken. So were Cupcake Cafe, The Cupcakery, Casa Cupcake, even Hello, Cupcake. All trademarked already.

So when Nicole Rogers applied for a business name, she settled on The Cupcake Spot for the little storefront she opened in December on S Dale Mabry Highway in Tampa.

A perfectly lovely name, paired with a plucky, cherry-topped cupcake logo, Tampa's C-Spot is our first entry in the national cupcake craze. New York City's Magnolia Bakery is credited with starting the frenzy in the mid 1990s, its buttercreamy allures immortalized in an episode of *Sex and the City* (and later in a *Saturday Night Live* digital short).

Then Oprah brought Los Angeles' Sprinkles Cupcakes to our collective consciousness (a gift from Barbra Streisand, they were Oprah's absolute faves). Not to be outdone, Ellen DeGeneres went on to enumerate the 10 best cupcakes in America.

There are more than a dozen craven-cupcaker blogs, including one launched in 2004 by Rachel Kramer Bussel, a former sex columnist for *The Village Voice* ([www.cupcakestakethecake.blogspot.com](http://www.cupcakestakethecake.blogspot.com)). One blog, the appropriately named CupcakeFetish ([www.cupcakefetish.com](http://www.cupcakefetish.com)), puts the number of cupcake shops at 475, spread through 13 countries.

And now we have our own.

What has taken cupcakes from the home-mom's sticky chore to adult obsession?

"Part of it is a nostalgic feeling about childhood," says Rogers. "It doesn't matter if you're 1 or 101, it plays to our egos. You get your very own cake and you're not sharing. They're portable, they're cute and they're portion-controlled so you don't overindulge."

Yeah, right. The Cupcake Spot has a 1950s diner motif, lots of chrome and hot pink. There are funky armchairs and bold black-and-white tile floors. But where X marks the Spot is the glass case of sweet stuff.

They make about 14 varieties each day, so though each is a single-serving cake, there's no law that you may have just one. In the name of journalism, I tried every one in the case, giving top honors to the Chocolate Elvis (banana cupcake, peanut butter buttercream and a dollop of chocolate ganache), the Berry Squared (strawberry cake topped with strawberry-raspberry cream cheese icing) and the Va-Va-Vanilla (a regular vanilla cake/icing combo elevated by black dots of real vanilla bean).



Kathleen Flynn/tbt\*

Nicole Rogers gave up her public relations career to open Cupcake Spot in South Tampa. Below is the Cuppy, a strawberry cupcake with vanilla bean icing and a Jelly Belly sour cherry ball.

## The Cupcake Spot

2401 S Dale Mabry Highway, Tampa  
(813) 258-3111

Hours: 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Tuesday through Friday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday

Prices: \$2.75 per cupcake; \$15.50 per half dozen; \$30 per dozen

It's not little kids thronging the Spot — one morning Viamedia cable advertising rep Lee Kercher bought a half dozen individually boxed cupcakes for potential clients.

"People get defensive when you're selling advertising," Kercher explains. "You've got to knock down their defenses. How do you stand out? With an unexpected treat."

Cupcake as secret weapon? The Tampa Bay area seems ready to embrace that idea.

