

WINNER

The Man Who Took the Cake

Please don't call Kurt Wait "Sweetcakes." Or "Sugar Daddy." Or "Doughboy." Since becoming the first man to win the Pillsbury Bake-Off, he's been the butt of countless baking puns—and he's had his fill. "'Studmuffin' was real hard to live down at work," says



Bake-Off champ Kurt Wait with son Cy and the million-dollar torte.

Wait, a business analyst and single father from Redwood City, CA. A little indignity, though, is a small price to pay for the million dollars his Macadamia Fudge Torte earned him.

Wait, 43, has always had a way with a whisk. "I did most of the cooking when I was married," he says. After his divorce four years ago, he became a baking fanatic: "It relaxed me and took my mind off things—not seeing my boy every day was the worst." Wait whipped up countless cookies, brownies, and lemon squares, much to his son's delight. Cy, now 9, joined his dad's baking extravaganzas on occasion, "but he really prefers making Jell-O," says Wait.

Eventually, Wait began concocting more sophisticated sweets like apple streusel and Black Forest cake, sharing them with coworkers. Inspired by their enthusiasm, he entered the Bake-Off in 1994 with an early version of his eventual winner. "The texture

wasn't as good," he explains now.

He spent the next two years fiddling with his devil's food cake, relying heavily on Cy taste-testings. Last spring Wait resubmitted his recipe, and in November found out he was one of 100 finalists. He baked his torte at least 25 times before the big event, trying various brands of chocolate chips and different-size nuts. Cy cracked eggs, stirred batter, and licked bowls to his heart's content.

In February, during Bake-Off week in Dallas, Wait discovered several other chocolate desserts that looked alarmingly luscious. "I was so nervous, I took off five pounds," he says, adding that he welcomed the weight loss since all the practice-baking had made his pants feel tighter.

The 12 judges voted unanimously for Wait's gooey confection. Wait took the news calmly, then called Cy as soon as he could. "I told him I'd won, and he didn't say a word; then he started crying because I couldn't pick him up from school that day. I had to tell his teacher to give him a big hug from me."

Now everyone wants to know what Wait will do with the fifty thousand dollars he'll receive annually for the next 20 years. Earthquake insurance and Cy's college tuition

top his list, but so far his son's sole request has been a Sega video system.

Wait says other purchases may be on the way: "I went to a store where I bought a bed a few months ago, to check out some stuff. Were they happy to see me! I told them I'd be back when I had more money."

So far, this baker's 15 minutes of fame have included an appearance on *The Tonight Show* ("Jay Leno ate my cake in about thirty seconds!") and a proposed TV movie-of-the-week ("It would be a pretty boring movie"). There have been no marriage proposals, though that could change: Recently, coworkers left a mock personal ad on his desk that began, "Divorced white male with money...."

"People at the office are real happy for me," Wait insists. "Only now they get mad when there's a meeting and I don't bring cake." —Ellen Seidman

For Wait's recipe, see page 128.

RESCUERS

Speaking Up for Silent Kids

Responding to an anonymous tip, social worker Silvia Loyo recently paid an emergency visit to a home in a middle-class suburb of Los Angeles. What she found was alarming: two neglected deaf sisters, ages 4 and 11, left alone in a filthy apartment without food.

Although the girls were frightened, they relaxed when Loyo spoke to them in American Sign Language. After learning that their hearing mother often beat them—and refused to learn sign language—the social worker arranged for the sisters to be placed in a foster home. Loyo's report was sent to Children's court where a judge ruled that the abusive mother would have to enroll in sign language and parenting classes if she wished to be reunited with her children.

"The sad fact is that many hearing parents don't bother to learn to sign, and hitting their children is the only way some know how to discipline them," says Loyo.

Handicapped children, including the deaf, are 70 percent more likely to be abused than other children, according to the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect in Washington, DC. Because deaf children communicate mostly in sign language, many social workers can't understand them and don't get the information they need to provide help. What makes Loyo so effective is that she not only knows sign but is deaf herself. Because the hearing-impaired feel

Signs of hope: Silvia Loyo, right, and Karen Bowman, center, with a former colleague.



she's one of them, she's able to uncover facts that might otherwise go unreported. And because Loyo wasn't born deaf, she can speak to hearing parents.

"I think my deafness helps me be more observant," she says. "I know deaf children's body language. If they're uncomfortable, I can sense that."

Loyo is a member of Los Angeles County's Deaf Services Unit, an agency set up in August 1994 to meet the special needs of the deaf community. Other team members include two deaf colleagues, Karen Bowman and Toshio Ozawa, as well as hearing social worker Angela Karlan and interpreter Aaron Gardner.

Loyo feels especially qualified to be an advocate for young deaf children. She lost her hearing at age 10 after taking medications for scoliosis. At 13, she was misdiagnosed as retarded by a psychologist who didn't know sign language. A caring teacher finally recognized Loyo's impairment and got her reassigned to a school for the deaf in Austin, TX. After earning a degree in psychology and social work at Gallaudet University, a college for the deaf, Loyo adopted a hearing son and pursued her passion for working with troubled families.

Bowman has been deaf since birth. Raised by deaf parents, she, too, believes her background gives her a special awareness. Bowman remembers an unusual case in which a deaf husband and wife were being questioned about the possible sexual abuse of their 2-year-old hearing child. Bowman, suspicious of the father's vague answers and odd facial expressions, interrogated him intensely. Her interview eventually led to the man's confession. "If it had been a hearing social worker, I believe the situation probably would have gone undetected," she says.

Before the Deaf Services Unit was established, hearing-impaired children in the L.A. area had little access to traditional social services. Social workers often didn't bother to conduct investigations at all.

"Now, from the initial interview through the court hearing, deaf children can expect sensitive help," says Nora Baladerian, Ph.D., director of the Disability, Abuse, and Personal Rights Project of L.A.

For the Deaf Services social workers, there is personal fulfillment that goes far beyond a job well done. Says Bowman, "When parents and children find out we're deaf, there's a deep sense of relief. The anger that comes from not being understood is gone and they are willing to get help. We give them hope."

—Susan Jaques

PETS

This Camp Is for the Dogs

Picture this: a conga line of dogs, wiggling their derrieres in a tail-wagging contest. Or maybe a canine kissing competition in which pooches plant slobbery smooches on their owners' faces. Or perhaps a wienie-retrieval race—a tough one, since the dogs are supposed to return the wienies uneaten.

All this and more await dogs and masters who attend Camp Gone to the Dogs, held for two weeks each summer on the lush grounds of the Putney



Dog days of summer: Camp owner Honey Loring with her adoring poodles Olympia, left, and Athena.

School in Putney, VT. The camp is the brainchild of Honey Loring, an ebullient former clinical psychologist. For Loring, 47, the owner of two standard poodles, a litter of pups, and a greyhound, the camp is a place where "dogs get quality time with their owners and vice versa. And it lets people really indulge their passion for their pets."

With Camp Gone to the Dogs, Loring has turned the concept of a traditional summer camp on its shaggy ear. Swimming lessons, for example, feature human instructors and canine students. Loring still laughs when she remembers one of last summer's campers, a fierce-looking rottweiler

named Goliath who held on to the instructor for dear life before finally braving a solo swim.

For doggie square dancing, owners pair up with their pooches and follow calls such as "pat your partner on the head." Other popular activities include the doggie bathing suit pageant and the costume parade. (Among last summer's parade participants were four shelties who came as a construction crew and a German shepherd who came as Little Red Riding Hood's grandma, wearing a pink satin bed jacket, matching cap, and wire-rimmed glasses.) Loring is adamant that the camp's emphasis be on participating, not winning. That means she awards every four-legged entrant in any event a dog biscuit or ribbon.

Dog campers can also participate in more traditional canine pursuits, such as jumping, Frisbee-catching, and tracking. For more serious-minded owners and dogs, there are obedience classes.

Loring, who once manufactured dog collars, started Camp Gone to the Dogs almost six years ago with a \$2,000 investment and no real certainty that she'd draw campers. But she did have a clear vision of what she wanted—"a place to go on vacation with my dogs where we could enjoy non-competitive activities and not have to sleep in a tent."

Enrollment has grown from 57 human campers that first summer to almost 400 in 1995. Last year's canines ranged from prizewinning show specimens to mutts that Loring lovingly refers to as "custom blended."

The \$650-a-week fee includes room (dogs and owners stay together in a school dormitory), board, and all activities. Although the camp is a for-profit enterprise, Loring holds a silent auction for dog charities each year. Last summer she raised more than \$1,600.

Now Loring is doggedly taking her idea one step further. Recently, she purchased an 1824 farmhouse on ten acres in Putney that she's turned into a year-round "bed and biscuit." The Tails Up Inn, which features dog-friendly leather couches and dog light-switch plates, is a private guest house for camp alums. Special training weekends are also open for nonalums.

—Janet Cawley