



## MARSHA LASKY AND SHARON LEACH OF SWEET THINGS

By DIANE SMITH

Marsha Lasky says when she and her business partner, Sharon Leach of Corte Madera, first opened Sweet Things at The Cove Shopping Center; she never doubted it would be a success. "If you use good ingredients, your product tastes good and it's consistent, you'll be successful," the Belvedere resident says.

"Our quality control is very strict," Sharon added. "If a batch of something is not up to our standards, including how it looks as well as tastes, we give it to the Marin Food Bank."

The two women met when they both worked at Joseph Magnin and became friends. “We both enjoyed cooking, and we knew we could work well together,” Marsha says, “so when we were ready to move on at the same time, we decided to be partners in a new bakery.”

That was 1977. Sweet Things began with just three items: carrot cake, banana cake and chocolate mousse torte. Their first customer was The Dock, a popular restaurant on Main Street in downtown Tiburon. Within three weeks, the number of their products rose to 25 items – cookies, muffins, cakes and pies – and the pair began to hire bakers, salespeople and truck drivers.

Running out of the space they were using at the back of a local restaurant, the two owners rented an 8,500-square-foot space in San Rafael to use as a production facility. This is where they now test new recipes, choose their special holiday items and bake everything for their two stores and for their Bay Area restaurant clients and their wholesale and on-line customers.

Business grew, and they opened a small, second store in San Francisco in 1997. They are proud that their employees stay with them long time: Amy Frost who runs production, joined them 37 years ago; Pam Ross, their custom cake decorator, began 29 years ago; and Michele Mason, manager of the Tiburon retail store, started 24 years ago.

In 2003, they opened the At Home store, adjacent to their Sweet Things bakery at The Cove. It carries unique home accessories.

"Fifty-percent of our bakery business is wholesale," Marsha says. "Our drivers deliver to restaurants and distributors from Sacramento to Monterey every day, and we have contracts with stores like Williams-Sonoma which sends our products all over the country." This year, Williams-Sonoma chose Sweet Things to bake the pies for its Thanksgiving dinners.

"One secret to Sweet Things' success is that we keep delegating jobs to others," Marsha says. "One person can never do it alone."

Marsha grew up in Sonoma, California. "I couldn't wait to move to San Francisco," she says. "I guess I'm just a city girl at heart. She went to San Francisco State, majored in psychology and business and graduated in 1968. During college, she spent a summer with her roommate working in a hotel in Germany and traveling around Europe.

While working at Joseph Magnin, Marsha volunteered at Suicide Prevention, working the phones and was about to go back to school to get her masters degree in social work when she and Sharon decided to team up.

Marsha moved to the Tiburon Peninsula 46 years ago and to Belvedere 40 years ago. She met Michael Lasky on a blind date in 1978, and the two were married in 1986.

One of Marsha's personal passions is landscaping. She spent six years on Belvedere's Park and Open Space Committee, is involved in the Garden Conservancy and, for the past six years, has been a member of Belvedere's Planning Commission.

Although she has no immediate plans to retire, she says when she does, she wants to help encourage women to be entrepreneurs. When that time comes, Marsha will be a great role model!