

Cake addict who started a low-calorie bakery from her mother's kitchen so she could eat treats everyday guilt-free now has a £1 million business (and Yasmin Le Bon and Little Mix are fans)

- Mariella Forte, 29, of Hampstead, started The Skinny Bakery from mum's kitchen
- She now sells thousands of low-calorie cakes and biscuits every month
- She manages to cut calories by replacing butter with quark and using tofu

By [IMOGEN BLAKE FOR MAILONLINE](#)

PUBLISHED: 11:39, 20 February 2018 | **UPDATED:** 13:37, 20 February 2018

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A self-confessed cake addict who founded a low-calorie bakery so that she could eat sweet treats everyday without putting on weight has turned her cravings into a £1 million business.

Mariella Forte, 29, who lives in Hampstead, north **London**, started The Skinny Bakery five years ago with just £2,000 of her own savings from her mother's kitchen. In the beginning, was selling her low-fat cakes - which all contain under 200 calories a pot and sell for £2.99 a pot - door-to-door.

But her hard work paid off as she has now turned over nearly £1 million and she's made birthday cakes for model Yasmin Le Bon and **Little Mix's** Jade Thirlwall.

She manages to cut calories while retaining the fluffy texture and fattening taste of normal cake by replacing butter with quark and using tofu in the icing.



Mariella Forte, 29, of Hampstead, north London, started The Skinny Bakery five years ago and has now made nearly £1 million

'I was honoured to make a cake for Yasmin Le Bon's 50th birthday,' Mariella told FEMAIL Food&Drink. 'It was a 4-tier cake which I assembled at the venue. I was so unbelievably nervous I would drop it.'

ADVERTISING



She added: 'We've also had the pleasure of making a chocolate cigarillo cake for the birthday of Little Mix's Jade Thirlwall. It's unbelievably nerve racking making cakes for celebrities – you sort of wonder whether they have superhuman taste buds and whether they'll like it. Fortunately the cakes have been well received to date.'

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She's also baked a cake for world-renowned burlesque artist Dita Von Teese.

Mariella's bite-sized biscuits and cakes usually each contain just 40 calories or less, while a serving is roughly 200 calories.



Among Mariella's creations is a chocolate cigarello cake which she made for Little Mix's Jade Thirlwell



The Skinny Bakery's Sweet Potato Brownies contain just 38 calories a bite and are made up of 46 per cent sweet potato (left). The Bakery's Chocolate Pears, one of its best-selling bites, are 42 calories each (right)



Mariella started The Skinny Bakery from her mother's kitchen after moving back in with her to save money and start her business

Her cake 'pearls' come in tubs of four or five treats and often they come in at well under 200 calories. Her Skinny Red Velvet Pearls, for instance, contain just 169 calories a tub.

She manages to slash calories by replacing fattening ingredients such as butter and cream with quark and even tofu which she uses in low-fat icing.

But finding ways to cut calories without compromising on taste wasn't easy, Mariella admitted.

'I can't tell you how many cakes ended up in the bin,' the philosophy graduate, who lives with her boyfriend, revealed.

'Baking is such a precise science that you're often fighting a losing battle when you mess with the rules behind it. Those who bake will know what I'm talking about.'



Starting with just £2,000 of savings, Mariella now runs a successful business and lives with her boyfriend in Hampstead, north London



The Skinny Bakery's Mocha Pearls contain just 39 calories each



The bakery's Red Velvet Pearls - made using beetroot - contain just 34 calories each (left). The Lemon Pearls meanwhile contain just 39 calories each (right)



'When you cook you can afford to throw in a pinch of salt or a handful of parsley. Using the wrong size tin or adding too much raising agent will leave you with a very messy oven to clean.

'I base my ingredient substitutions on flavour and texture. So, for example, instead of using butter in our frosting we use tofu.

'Tofu has a fraction of the fat and calories of butter. Its texture isn't totally dissimilar to butter and it doesn't taste of a lot. That's an easier one.

'But putting fruits and veggies in the cakes resulted in many a runny mess that turned out dense and rubbery rather than light and fluffy post baking.'

Her low-calorie bakery began when Mariella was working in the music industry licensing songs for use in adverts, films and TV programmes when she became fed

up at the lack of tasty low-calorie sweet treats on the high street.

Finding that low-fat cakes were either surprisingly calorific, containing up to 350 calories each, or tasting of 'cardboard,' she started experimenting in the kitchen to see if she could make delicious but virtuous treats.



Mariella manages to slash calories by replacing fattening ingredients such as butter and cream with quark and even tofu



As well as cakes, The Skinny Bakery also makes low-fat and low-calorie biscuits, including mini gingerbread men

21/02/2018

Skinny Bakery makes cakes for Yasmin Le Bon and Little Mix

She said: 'I'm of an old fashioned school of thought – everything in moderation.

'Our brand is about having a little bit of what you love. It's the cakes we think should be skinny and not the customers.

'I don't follow any particular diet, I try to avoid dairy as it doesn't agree with me.'

On the backlash against the clean eating movement, she added: 'I can see the reasons for the backlash against clean eating. Many diets like vegan and gluten-free can result in you eating high fat foods, or not enough food.

'Other restrictive "clean eating" diets out there encourage eating entirely unprocessed foods which have been shown to have an adverse effect on your digestive system.

'Skinny Bakery is really encouraging you to have a little bit of what you love, in moderation and substituting a lot of fat and sugar with healthier alternatives, giving it a nutritional profile you can enjoy every day.'

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SKINNY BAKERY

The Skinny Bakery now has a vegan range, with pots of sponge 'pearls' made without any dairy ingredients or eggs that contain just 198 to 209 calories per 80g pot. In Choc-Orange, Double-Chocolate, Vanilla Bean and Banana Shake flavours, they are piped with a dairy-free white or dark chocolate tofu icing centre. The dairy and eggs in the sponges have been replaced with soy yoghurt and chia seeds. The pearls are just 40 calories each on average, and taste as delicious as a full-fat cake. They come in packs of five and tubs are priced at £2.99 each.

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