Natural Baker

As the mother of two young children, Nora Staebler Schultz ‘91 worries about the colorful, sugary treats kids want to eat. One daughter loved Pillsbury’s “Funfetti” cake mix with colored sprinkles, but Schultz hesitated to make it for class parties. “I didn’t feel good about all of the hydrogenated oils and artificial ingredients and decided that someone needed to do something to help parents with convenient yet wholesome dessert options,” she says. “I wanted to make a homemade cake, but didn’t have time to make it from scratch.”

Because most natural baking products on the market target very specific consumer segments (such as those with food allergies or those seeking “gourmet” organic options), Schultz saw an opportunity to create mixes that would appeal more broadly to families. In 2006, she and her husband, Steven, turned her love of baking and passion for natural foods into Naturally Nora, a line of all-natural cake and frosting mixes (www.naturallynora.com). Drawing on her experience at the Campbell Soup Company, where she worked for five years on a range of product-development projects, Schultz collaborated with various ingredient suppliers to form her own brand. She began with the best basic “from scratch” recipes she knew and modified them into quick boxed mixes that would attract ingredient-conscious shoppers.

Her products, offering such choices as “Alot’a Dots,” “Cheerful Chocolate,” and “Surprising Stars,” have no artificial flavors, colors, preservatives, or hydrogenated oils. Schultz also aims to address the concerns of parents who worry about food allergies, so her mixes are nut-, dairy-, and soy-free (either milk or soymilk is added during preparation) and are certified Kosher.

Schultz’s interest in natural and organic foods evolved from concerns about the state of the nation’s food supply. “Our over-reliance on low-cost, highly processed foods has contributed to the national epidemic of obesity and has created a dependence upon chemicals harmful to the environment,” she says. “I find that natural and organic foods often have greater flavor and nutritional value than many conventional foods.”

Locating all-natural ingredients such as non-alkalized cocoa and unbromated, unbleached wheat flour proved to be a challenge. “It was an incredibly eye-opening experience, because many suppliers I initially wanted to work with had no idea what a ‘natural’ ingredient was,” she explains. “The definition is still very subjective, and I had to spend a lot of time explaining that I didn’t find certain ingredients acceptable.” It took her almost 18 months to find the right colorings for the sprinkles used in her mixes because most natural colors turn brown during the baking process.

Schultz cites her psychology concentration as critical to her career in product development and marketing. “I had to understand the emotional problem I was solving for consumers in order to develop a solution,” she says. “I made sure I took my concept, packaging, and product line to other moms for input during development.” When the parents she consulted wanted to see a “delicious-looking slice of cake” on Naturally Nora boxes, Schultz responded by hiring the food illustrator responsible for Ben & Jerry’s and Nantucket Nectars’ packaging. “I made many revisions based on their feedback,” she reports, “and as a result the final products have been extremely well-received.”

Naturally Nora products started shipping last May, and Schultz is excited about the future. Her mixes are currently available in more than 400 Whole Foods and other stores in the mid-Atlantic region and parts of the Midwest, as well as online through Amazon Grocery. “I love being thanked by moms for having provided what they’ve been looking for,” she says. “It’s incredibly satisfying to know that I’ve helped put a smile on people’s faces.”

~ KRISTEN A. KECHES

the practice of soring, the intentional infliction of injury to horses’ legs for the purpose of enhancing their gait in certain exhibitions and auctions.

1991


Born to MIKE BOBBIT and his wife, Antoinette, a daughter, Naomi Michelle Bobbitt, on October 24, “Glory be to God, and hooray, Antoinette!”

Lisa Brown, J.D. ’96, writes, “My husband, David Adler (Brandeis ’88), and I welcomed our first child, Rachel Evelyn Adler, on August 20. Rachel is the latest development in my incredibly lucky streak. In the past two years I’ve moved from San Francisco, where I had practiced law for 10 years, back to my home town of Boston, bought a big old house in the suburbs, met and married my wonderful husband, joined a different law firm, made partner, and had this gorgeous child. It’s been a dizzying but very gratifying series of major life changes. David and I were thrilled to have our