

# Miss Hospitality bakes up a sweet business

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BY

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Nemeth loves the design aspect of creating petit fours, as well as baking. (Photo by Gwen Sisson, SDN)

Starkville's Miss Hospitality has always loved to cook, but after she began making petit fours for various activities at church, she began to find sweet success.

Mary Lowry Nemeth said she remembers helping her mom bake her dad's favorite cookies when she was barely tall enough to look over the butcher block in their kitchen. Nemeth loves a cooking challenge, and over the years, taught herself to make bread, pizza and pie crusts and other favorite baked goods.

"I remember as a little girl watching Snow White make pies and it looked like so much fun," Nemeth said. "I wanted to make pies like Snow White."

About six years ago, Nemeth and her grandmother took a class to learn to make petit fours. She said it was something she was interested in and thought it would be fun to learn.

"Petit fours are actually rather easy to do," Nemeth said. "They are unique and so much fun to do."

She began making petit fours for wedding and baby showers at her church, Emmanuel Baptist. Her petit fours became more and more popular, and a business was born out of friend and family requests. She has also taught classes on making petit fours.

"It is the perfect business for a busy teenager," said Nemeth's mother, Renee. "It is seasonal with most requests around the holidays and in the spring."

Nemeth uses a basic white box cake mix and adds various flavorings, depending on the season or the event. She uses a

buttercream frosting as a crumb coat, then a thinner frosting to coat the entire cake. The "hard" part of making petit four is making sure the frosting is completely smooth before the top coat hardens.

From there, she adds various frosting colors to create original designs. Designs range from initials, flowers, script, dots and stripes, to seasonal decor such as Christmas trees and ornaments.

But there is one person who loves to see a design go bad. Nemeth's little brother, Michael, has the opportunity to eat the petit fours that are not up to Nemeth's design standards. When asked how he feels about Nemeth's petit fours, Michael gets a big smile on his face. Mom said he is pretty happy to see petit fours that don't make the "cut."

Nemeth said the petit fours taste so much better if eaten within 12-20 hours. She is adamant about the freshness of the product, and will ice and decorate all of the petit fours the day of an event.

Recently, she was asked to make 150 petit fours for a wedding — her largest order in the five years she has been in business. Nemeth said it was fun, but she took a break from baking for a time afterwards.

And as much as she enjoys baking, her mom is adamant that she not take on any jobs this summer, as she prepares for state competition for Mississippi's Miss Hospitality Pageant.

Nemeth will leave Sunday evening to prepare for Miss Hospitality Week in Hattiesburg. She will be one of 28 contestants who will prepare throughout the week with rehearsals, tours, interviews and other special events in preparation for competition set for July 29-30 at the Saenger Theatre in Downtown Hattiesburg.

Nemeth was crowned Starkville's Miss Hospitality in March and began serving almost immediately.

"Serving as Miss Hospitality is such an honor," Nemeth said. "It means being involved in the community, encouraging tourism, and representing Starkville. I feel that participating in Miss Hospitality has made me so much more informed on what was going on in Starkville and all that we have to offer."

Nemeth said she loves that Starkville is a growing, vibrant community.

"Our citizens are involved and really want to improve Starkville," Nemeth said. "We have such a bright future."

The pageant organizers see the local and the state Miss Hospitality is a role model. Nemeth said she seeks opportunities to challenge and improve herself to become a better role model.

"I have a tremendous love for learning, and that is something I try to pass on to anyone I come into contact with," Nemeth said.

As she strives to become a role model, she is quick to say her role model has always been her mother, Renee Nemeth.

"She has really invested in me and encouraged me to be my best," Nemeth said. "She passed on to me a love for reading and learning and a true love for Mississippi."

She said her biggest accomplishment has been successfully completing her first semester at Mississippi State University.

"I took 16 hours and finished the semester with a 4.0 and President's List," Nemeth said. "During the semester I was able to get involved in many activities on campus, including Diamond Girls, Honors Council, intermurals, and the Baptist Student Union. Most importantly, I made some wonderful friends and really enjoyed my first semester."

Nemeth is interested in graduating from Mississippi State University and going to nursing school to concentrate on neonatal intensive care.

"I would also be interested in using my education in nursing to minister to others in medical missions," Nemeth said.

She is the daughter of Mike and Renee Nemeth of Starkville. She has a younger sister, Jacquelyn, 16, who loves MSU sports and competitive cheerleading, and brother, Michael, 9, who loves motorcycles. Her grandfather, Jerry Farris, received his degree from Mississippi State and lives in Jackson.

"I would like to thank God for blessing me with such amazing family and friends," Nemeth said. "I can't wait to see what He has in store for me in the future."

Tickets for the 2011 Mississippi Miss Hospitality Pageant are now on sale and can be purchased at the Saenger Theater

Box Office at 601-584-4888 or online at [http://www. HattiesburgSaenger.com](http://www.HattiesburgSaenger.com). Tickets are \$20 for premiere reserved seating and \$15 for general reserved seating. Two-night ticket packages are also available.

For more information about Mississippi's Miss Hospitality Pageant, contact the State Pageant office at 601-268-3220 or [mshosp@hattiesburg.org](mailto:mshosp@hattiesburg.org).