



Bella Leishear, the inspiration for Bella's Cookies, holds a package of her Champion Chunk chocolate chunk cookies.

Milton 4- year- old helps mom open cookie business All products organic

By Nicole Hughes Cape Gazette Staff

Parents, beware: 4- year old Bella Leishear has something that can't be found in local toy stores, yet every kid dreams of owning one - her own all- natural cookie company, Bella's Cookies.

Bella's Cookies started selling cookies last August when president Kelly Leishear, known to Bella as Mom, perfected her recipes. Starting this week, Leishear and her husband Mark, of Milton, will give away samples of their cookies each Saturday at the farmers market at the Cape May Lewes Ferry. Samples are also distributed every other Monday at the Bottle & Cork in Dewey.

"I make them; they bake them," said Bella, the face behind the cookie.

After 75 trial recipes, Leishear found the recipe for Bella's Champion Chunk chocolate chunk cookie. The finished product is a firm, crusty outside that each bite sinks through to a softer, chocolate- chunk flooded center.

A solid sheet of chocolate lines the bottom of every cookie. Leishear began selling her cookies at local events such as the Delaware State Fair and the Miss Delaware competition.

"When Bella bites into those store-bought colored cookies now, she sometimes gags and makes a face," said Leishear.

“Every morning she wakes up and wants more of my cookies.”

Leishear started baking cookies for her daughter because she did not want Bella to consume any artificial flavors, preservatives or food dyes that are commonly found in store-bought cookies.

Leishear received a degree in dietetics, the study of nutrition and its relation to health, from New York’s SUNY Morrisville State College. Her distrust of artificial foods comes from a daunting personal experience.

At the age of 24, Leishear was diagnosed with an advanced form of cancer. Although she persevered in her fight against the disease, the scare has inspired her to investigate the contents of her food and her children’s food today.

“Artificial ingredients, preservatives, trans fats, and hydrogenated anything just shouldn’t go into growing bodies. They shouldn’t go into anybody’s body,” said Leishear. “The simplest way to protect ourselves is to avoid these things.”

Bella’s Champion Chunk chocolate chunk cookie contains organic wheat flour, natural chocolate chunks, natural brown sugar, natural grade AA butter, all natural eggs from vegetarian fed hens, natural sugar, organic canola oil, organic brown rice syrup, pure African vanilla **Continued on page 44**

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Kelly Leishear, president of Bella’s Cookies, wipes some cookie crumbs off her daughter’s face.

extract, natural baking soda and aluminum-free baking powder. They are also gluten-free for those who can’t have wheat.

Leishear also has cookie recipes that are entirely organic, a qualification of food that is produced using materials and practices to promote ecological balance. Organic foods avoid artificial ingredients and forms of production.

“The organic lifestyle is healthy and supports ethical production of food in different

countries,” said Leishear. “ It makes sure foreign workers get their fair end of the deal.”

Bella’s Cookies also has a recipe that meets vegan standards, an eating lifestyle that excludes all animal products, including eggs and dairy. A potato and tapioca starch mixture substitutes these products in Bella’s Vegan varieties.

Leishear’s husband, Mark, testifies that the all- natural and organic cookies are the best cookies he’s had. The Leishears have pursued a healthy lifestyle since the start of their relationship. The young couple first met in a gym in Virginia. One day, when Mark left his roommates at home and went to the beach, he returned to find his home burnt to the ground.

Thrown into moving in with Kelly, he then discovered their connection. After dating for three months, Mark took Kelly on a vacation to Jamaica for her birthday, and they were married overseas.

“I was the exact opposite of the type of person who eats organic foods back then,” said Mark Leishear. “I used to be scared of them, but as soon as I tried one cookie, I wanted more.”

Kelly Leishear is currently completing her recipes for other cookie varieties, including wild blueberry and lemon, rosewater, white chocolate, breakfast, and her husband’s favorite, rum raisin.

“We want people to fall in love with the cookies and grow with the company,” said Mark Leishear. “When we come out with new types of cookies, we want people to rush out to get them like a new record that their favorite band released. We want to get people excited.”

Bella’s cookies will soon be distributed in local health food stores, salons and other locations.

Orders for cookies can be placed by calling 684- 8152 or by visiting www.bellascookies.com.