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Orinda Mom's Accidental Culinary Successes

By Diane Claytor



Sharon McGinnis Girdlestone and her helpers, Lennon (left) and Finn (right) Girdlestone and Sage Balducci pick fruit for muffins baked for My Sustainable Table. Photo Jennifer Balducci

back in the sunshine." With family still in Southern California, that was their first choice; but a job transfer to the Bay Area sealed the deal.

At 4-years-old, Lennon made a request: he wanted a dragon cake. "I had no idea where to get one," Girdlestone remembers. "I had never made a cake in my life. But I figured I had two days, my sister could help and I'd just do it. I made an unbelievable mess," but the end result, she said, was a huge, bright green dye-filled cake that everyone loved. People started talking about this incredible cake, sharing pictures on social media and soon she was getting orders for custom cakes.

Girdlestone insists she was never a cook. In fact, she said with a smile, her husband would say she was a terrible baker. "I made him muffins once that were as hard as rocks and tasted like salt," she claims. But with orders for her custom cakes increasing, she obtained a cottage license, formed Lovely Little Cakes, and baked up to 10 custom cakes per week from her home kitchen.

Believing that some behavioral issues could be the result of food dyes, Girdlestone, who acknowledges that Lennon's dragon cake was anything but healthy, began teaching herself about healthy foods. She researched everything she could and learned about baking cakes with no gluten, dyes, casein or refined sugar. And the orders kept coming.

Soon requests for healthier meals started coming in. "There was one woman who asked me to make a paleo lunch every day for her family of six. Then she wanted paleo dinners," Girdlestone says. Again, a simple plan snowballed and more and more people began asking for healthy meals. "I absolutely hadn't planned on doing this," Girdlestone states unequivocally. But again, she did her homework, consulted with a nutritionist, learned "everything I could about healthy eating and then just went for it."

She rented space in a commercial kitchen and launched My Sustainable Table, delivering good-for-

Sitting across the table from Sharon McGinnis Girdlestone, eyeing her flawless skin, beautiful long blonde hair, and fashionable outfit, it's easy to guess that she's a model. Once she starts talking with her lilting voice and English accent, thoughts shift; maybe she's an actor. When she says she spent many years working as a fashion designer, a bulb goes off; now that makes sense. But when the Orinda resident explains what she does now - and how she accidentally fell into her job - surprise sets in. She certainly doesn't look like a cook or the successful owner of My Sustainable Table.

Born in Northern England, Girdlestone's family moved to Southern California when she was a teenager. In 2005, she moved back to England "so I could see what it was like to live in my home country as an adult," she explains. It appears to have been a wise decision; she met a handsome Englishman, married him and had their first son, Lennon, there. Three years later, Girdlestone says, "we returned to California because I wanted to be

you meals throughout Lamorinda and, by affiliating with other healthy food providers, beyond the immediate area.

Every meal Girdlestone produces is clean and wholesome. All ingredients are locally sourced, seasonal, organic, gluten and GMO free. There's something for every diet, Girdlestone says proudly. "It's clean eating all the way. There's absolutely no rubbish." She creates her own menus and develops her own recipes. A glance at her website is enough to make any mouth water. Meals offered during a week in early June included organic plum, chia almond flour muffins, gluten free caprese, turkey quinoa bake, organic dill sauerkraut; organic basil and cashew chicken, and coconut macaroon almond granola.

My Sustainable Table caters approximately 200 meals per week. And Girdlestone does it all. She has one helper and between the two of them, food is purchased, chopped, prepped, cooked, individually packaged and readied for pick up and delivery. And she still bakes approximately three healthier custom cakes every week, although these she typically makes at home so "I can see my family; so they know who I am," she said laughingly.

Like most young kids, her two boys want to eat junk food. They once told her she was a "mean, horrible mommy because I was making them eat gluten-free," Girdlestone admits. "I just teach them and hope they'll remember what's good for them."

An avid supporter of the Bay Area Crisis Nursery, Girdlestone donates a percentage of her profits to the organization.

Girdlestone can't help laughing at herself, admitting that her "accidental career" story is hilarious. "I never cooked. I never baked. And here I am with two businesses. I love what I do and feel great because I know that I'm helping people eat healthier. What we put in our bodies matters."

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Plum paleo muffins baked by Sharon McGinnis Girdlestone for My Sustainable Table.

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