

BROWARD BUZZ

Outburst
Where Broward goes to vent

'Cake man' is sweet on service

Business offers free tastings to wedding crowd

BY JERRY BERRIOS
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For Wilt Stallings — “the cake man” — the wedding crowd can be the toughest to please.

It takes more than free samples of his wife's gourmet cakes to sweeten up the brides, the grooms and the mothers-in-law-to-be who attend his Saturday morning tastings at Field of Flowers in Davie.

IT'S A PLEASURE

It takes enthusiasm and a sense of humor.

“He seems to have customer service under control, especially with all those fickle women,” said newlywed Kim Delaurier of Cooper City, who visited the store twice to make up her mind.

She said Stallings gave her samples to try out on relatives: “The mother-in-law had to taste it.” She settled on a white chocolate cake with white chocolate truffles and fresh raspberries.

Stallings and his wife, Susie, own Susie's Scrumptious Sweets, which began as Susie's hobby 13 years ago. Now it's a thriving family business. In addition to weddings, they make custom cakes for special occasions like birthdays and baby showers.

The couple have been dishing out free samples at the Davie store, 5101 S. University Dr., for almost five years. Wilt Stallings said 100 percent of their sales come from the tastings.

“That's why we do it,” Stallings said, presiding with a spatula over about a dozen cakes. “It's the best form of advertising.”

But selling the icing for someone's dream wedding takes patience.

Stallings, 57, spent more than 45 minutes with Deanna McSwain and Tony Diamante as they struggled between the Key lime cake and the white vanilla with Bavarian cream custard for their Nov. 9 wedding in Margate. They tasted about six different cakes, with Stallings dishing out ever more samples and explaining the flavors.

“It's a hard decision for



CARE FOR A SLICE? Wilt Stallings passes out wedding cake samples at Field of Flowers in Davie.

your wedding,” McSwain said. Stallings is at his best when the eight seats in front of him are full.

He recites the offerings enthusiastically. Among them: Key lime cake with Key lime custard; chocolate Kahlua cake with chocolate Kahlua truffles; and banana cake with chocolate sour cream ganache, his favorite.

“You tell me what flavor you like, I can probably get you what you want,” Stallings tells the crowd.

Ice-cold water and espresso help wash down the samples.

He also serves up some advice.

“I have been married 30 years,” Stallings tells Monica Camero of Hialeah, who is tying the knot Nov. 24. “Marriage isn't 50/50. It's a 100 percent/100 percent.”

Across the store, Susie Stallings takes cake orders. The couple communicate on a two-way radio.

“He truly enjoys being with the people,” she said.

Wilt Stallings said being the cake man isn't so different from his regular job as a construction coordinator at Magna Casa in Fort Lauderdale.

“All I'm trying to do is relate to people,” Stallings said.

His philosophy on work and life is all about fun: “If you have to dig a ditch, sing a song.”

IF YOU GO

Susie and Wilt Stallings of Susie's Scrumptious Sweets hold complimentary cake tastings noon to 4:30 p.m. every Saturday at Field of Flowers, 5101 S. University Dr., Davie. Call 954-748-4740.

SMILING FACES WANTED

It's A Pleasure profiles people who go beyond the call of courtesy in their jobs serving the public. To nominate someone, call the Broward news desk at 954-538-7102 or send e-mail to browardnews@herald.com



PHOTOS BY LILLY ECHEVERRIA/HERALD STAFF

SAMPLE SOME OF THIS:

Above, Wilt Stallings prepares to dish out a slice of wedding cake during a free tasting at Field of Flowers in Davie. Stallings and his wife, Susie, own Susie's Scrumptious Sweets. At left, Stallings pours a glass of ice-cold water he has on hand to help wash down samples.



Psssst! Want to buy, sell frequent flier miles? It's a risky route

BY WANDA J. DeMARZO
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BROWARD CONSUMER

Cindi Kurczewski, Delta spokeswoman. “It subjects the violator to damages and litigation.”

If a traveler is caught using someone else's awards — or using a ticket issued in someone else's name — the ticket will be confiscated and the traveler will have to pay the fare, usually at a much higher cost, Kurczewski said.

There are no state or federal laws prohibiting the transfer of mileage to someone else. However, it is a violation of your

membership agreement with the airline, said J.R. Kelly, director of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

“We don't get any complaints about people being ripped off by people selling or purchasing frequent flier mileage,” Kelly said, because travelers know it violates airline policy. “Think of it as someone having a membership card to a gym and then allowing a friend use that card — the contract specifies the membership is only for that person.”

One South Florida business

WHERE TO CALL

Consumers with complaints about ticket brokers can call the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services at 1-800-435-7352.

has been buying and selling mileage, awards and points for more than seven years.

Jerry Hershkowitz of First Class for Less, a ticket broker, said he pays around one cent per mile, which means a person would get around \$1,000 for 100,000 miles.

“Right now, we're receiving

too many calls to handle because people are afraid to fly,” he said.

If saving money is the purpose of going through brokers, Kurczewski said, it's cheaper to go through a travel agent or find deals on the airlines' website.

Delta Airlines will take

action against anyone caught using someone else's awards, points and frequent flier mileage.

So far in court, the airlines have generally prevailed in civil cases claiming fraud against airline brokers and in some cases have gone after the buyer and the seller, said Ed Perkins, consumer advocate for the American Society of Travel Agents and a nationally syndicated travel columnist.

“The airlines have been very diligent in prosecuting brokers and purchasers,” Perkins said. “It is very risky, and not worth it.”