

# Queen of Buttertarts!

By Lisa Brandt

Joan Hepburn has always loved to bake. Friends and family who have enjoyed her butter tarts have been telling her for years that she should be selling the treats. And now she's doing just that with Joanie's Pastries, specializing in gluten-free goodies, at area markets including the Komoka Community Market in the heart of Komoka.

Six years ago, Joan was diagnosed with Celiac Disease, a hyper-sensitivity to gluten that leads to serious digestive issues. That was a time when gluten-free products were as heavy as bricks with all the flavour of a hunk of Styrofoam but, Joan found ways to make them "spectacular". She was given a recipe for gluten-free pastry that provided a base but needed her own special touches. A master gluten-free baker was born. And there's nothing in the taste of Joanie's pastries that gives away that they don't have gluten.

June first is National Butter Tart Day, but that date takes on another significance for Joan now. Her friend Stephanie, the one she discovered butter tarts with in elementary school, died from cancer on that day this past summer. It was Stephanie's passing that spurred Joan on to turn her passion into a business.

Joan recently entered the Canadian Butter Tart Festival in Paris, Ontario where butter tart-makers from across the country go to compete. It's quite a serious business. Some competitors and fans are purists who won't hear of a butter tart containing raisins or nuts. Then there are rebels who dare to add ingredients like chocolate chips or pumpkin spice.

Joan's fans on Facebook rave about her original butter tarts as well as a bacon/maple version. This was Joan's first ever competition and her bacon/maple tart placed 3rd overall against 57 bakers! A real testimony to the quality and goodness of her gluten free tart.

In addition to the Komoka Market on Saturdays, Joanie's Pastries are sold on Fridays at the Masonville Market and Thursdays at Covent Garden Market in downtown London. Although she has a background in sales, Joan says the tarts sell themselves. She offers samples because one taste is all it takes to turn a curious shopper into a customer. For the holiday season she's offering a variety pack of mini-tarts, perfect for gift-giving.

Joan loves the camaraderie of the market atmosphere. For now, she is a one-person operation, but she hopes to expand soon as more and more people discover her. Find Joanie's Pastries on Facebook and Instagram, and email for information and custom orders: joaniespastries@gmail.com.



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