

# Once Just a Cupcake, Now a Swell

## Sweets All Over

**T**HE sweet lowdown on some of New York's most notable cupcakes:

**AMY'S BREAD** 672 Ninth Avenue (47th Street), (212) 977-2670; Chelsea Market, 75 Ninth Avenue (15th Street), (212) 462-4338; 972 Lexington Avenue (70th Street), (212) 537-0270.

**AMY SEDARIS** at Joe, 141 Waverly Place (Seventh Avenue), (212) 924-6750; at Bonsignour, 35 Jane Street (Eighth Avenue), (212) 229-9700.

**BUTTERCUP BAKE SHOP** 973 Second Avenue (51st Street), (212) 350-4144.

**CRUMBS** 321½ Amsterdam Avenue (75th Street), (212) 712-9800.

**CUPCAKE CAFE** 522 Ninth Avenue (39th Street), (212) 465-1530.

**DOWNTOWN ATLANTIC** 364 Atlantic Avenue (Bond Street), Brooklyn, (718) 852-9945.

**KITCHENETTE** 1272 Amsterdam Avenue (123rd Street), (212) 531-7600; 80 West Broadway (Warren Street), (212) 267-6740.

**MAGNOLIA BAKERY** 401 Bleecker Street (West 11th Street), (212) 462-2572.

**MITCHEL LONDON FOODS** 22A East 65th Street, (212) 737-2850; 458 Ninth Avenue (35th Street), (212) 563-7750.

**POLKA DOT CAKE STUDIO** 312 Bleecker Street (Seventh Avenue), (212) 645-0500.

**SAGE AMERICAN KITCHEN** 26-21 Jackson Avenue, Long Island City, Queens, (718) 361-0707; at Cafe St. Bart's, 109 East 50th Street, (212) 888-2664.

**WILLIAM GREENBERG JR. DESERTS** 1100 Madison Avenue (82nd Street), (212) 744-0304.

**YURA & COMPANY** 1645 Third Avenue (92nd Street), (212) 860-8060; 1659 Third Avenue (93rd Street), (212) 860-8060; 1292 Madison Avenue (92nd Street), (212) 860-8060.



Like skimpy Petit Bateau T-shirts and Hello Kitty knapsacks, cupcakes are supposedly designed for children, but they have also become fashionable accessories for knowing grown-ups. Seizing on the back-to-childhood trend, New York bakeries like Kitchenette and Sage American Kitchen have engineered copies of the packaged Hostess cupcake, right down to the squiggle of white icing on the top, the chocolate frosting that peels off in one piece, and the cream filling. It happens to be a delicious combination; it's also a visual joke.

Most of the contestants could take a lesson or two from Sage, whose small cupcakes approached my ideal. The cake foundation was moist and chewy, yet not too sweet and not too dense. The frosting was laid on with a restrained hand, and the chocolate frosting, deeply flavored and nearly black, let the palate sink into layer after layer of concentrated flavor. Small but mighty, the Sage cupcake weighed in at a scant three and a half ounces but delivered twice the pleasure of its bloated competitors.

Downtown and Sage can also take pride in their cupcakes. Downtown made the best chocolate version, with a dense, rich, chocolatey cake. Its icing was thick and fudgy, with genuine flavor. The cake in the vanilla entry had character, with a light, frothy icing that swirled high above the cake. Sage's petite vanilla cake also had a distinct lemony quality. Its chocolate version was a knockoff of the famous Hostess cupcake, and quite an improvement on the original. The icing, with its narrow white squiggle, was rich and flavorful, and the chocolate cake, though slightly dry, improved with a bite of the creamy center.