

TABLE TALK

# Mrs. Bentley's Desserts

## WHERE DREAMS COME TRUE

story and photos by LEIGH CORT



Leigh Cort

**K**ayshla Bentley opened Mrs. Bentley's Desserts less than a month ago inside the most unique location — nestled in a cute food cart steps from the Avenues Mall food court. She had

a dream that took nearly a decade to develop after years of being a binge watcher of "The Cake Boss" as one of his millions of fans.

In a city that has been blessed with heavenly bread smells wafting through various culinary neighborhoods and trendy bakeries that address every dietary requirement, Mrs. Bentley's Desserts offers small beauties that customers admit: "They are so beautiful, I don't want to eat them!"

We often imagine a dessert stop in the same breath as coffee, a window into thriving bakeries, doughnut shops,



Purple strawberries are a feast for both the eyes and the sweet tooth.

cupcake specialists — all common denominators when we imagine sweet desserts. However, Kayshla's concept and imagination took her creative hands into a totally different direction. And her original foray into baking was a hobby that brought her true joy when she could create a simple chocolate covered jumbo marshmallow, strawberry or pretzel stick for one of her friends or close family. She had no thought that she could wave goodbye to her prior career in a law firm and embark on opening her own petite place as everyone practically begged her to take the chance!

Kayshla enjoys every day as if it's the first day with passion and excitement to create and sell her delicious chocolate-covered individual desserts but to also make each piece into edible art. She personally prepares everything sold in her cart fresh to order the day before she opens each morning. And if she's creating desserts for a private event, she's meticulous about guaranteeing



A box of assorted treats from Mrs. Bentley's Desserts.

freshness and beauty every day.

On her grand opening date, Sept. 16, all the lovely treats were sold out, something that still surprises Kayshla. Her formula for creating a custom-designed dessert means uncomplicated — no silverware, no plates, only napkins and many on sticks. Featuring very affordable prices, her growing clientele recognizes that their orders — even the smallest order of a half dozen chocolate-dipped Oreos or Rice Krispies treats — can't be found at a regular market.

Born and raised in New York City, she lived in many locations throughout the Northeast before meeting and marrying Nathaniel Bentley — they now have been married for 13 years and have two small daughters. Of her husband, she proudly admits, "He is the one who puts the Bentley in Mrs. Bentley's Desserts!"

He's very much an important part of their partnership. She handles all the creative baking and decorating, and he is the accountant/bookkeeper. But it's Kayshla's love for chocolate and creating pretty edibles that was her niche when they agreed to go "all in" to make Mrs.



Kayshla Bentley recently opened Mrs. Bentley's Desserts just steps from the Avenues Mall food court.

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## DESSERTS

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Bentley's Desserts an official business.

Without hesitation, her tiny cakes and cake pops are like what one would see on a professionally designed wedding dessert table, baby shower, sweet 16 party or special holiday. Her No. 1 best sellers are the beautifully decorated and 100% totally edible cake doughnuts. Baked not fried, they have a soft spongy texture covered in a thin veil of candy-coated chocolate wafer that melts in your mouth. Kayshla uses vanilla-flavored chocolate, classic milk and dark chocolate depending on the color-scheme of the holiday or special



Cake pops on sticks.

events.

Kayshla feels the excitement of being at the launch and beginning of her journey. Her goal for this year is to expand Mrs. Bentley's Desserts into a larger kiosk inside the mall where she will have the opportunity of baking her cake doughnuts fresh to order. If there was one essential similarity between "The Cake Boss" and Kayshla, it was the spunk to accept any challenge.

From the cart to the kiosk — and then a dream to grow into a larger storefront — we'll be watching Mrs. Bentley's Desserts as we, too, dream of that first bite of heaven ... an irresistible jumbo sweet strawberry with a tiny chocolate edible rose.

# CULINARY WORLD CONVERGES FOR AMELIA ISLAND COOKOUT EPICUREAN WEEKEND

The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island looks to start a new tradition for the "foodies" in the area with its inaugural Amelia Island Cookout Epicurean Weekend scheduled for Oct. 20-22.

"Our vision is to continue it every October moving forward," said Joe Murphy, director of marketing with The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island.

The weekend-long showcase will be a celebration of food and the various flavors and ways in which to cook and enjoy the culinary world.

A mix of both local and nationally renowned chefs will be featured during the event as part of several chef-inspired demonstrations where attendees will have the opportunity to hear and learn from the chefs firsthand.

According to Murphy, the interactive nature of the event brought about by the demonstrations is something that was a priority and something The Ritz-Carlton really wanted to highlight.

"We'll have different action stations, where guests can mingle with the chefs as they share tips for making their dishes," Murphy said. "We



Chef Okan Kizilbayir of Salt Restaurant.



Lee Jones of Chef's Garden.



Tank Jackson of Holy City Hogs.

believe that people now more than ever are attracted to this kind of event because it is really engaging. They truly feel a part of it."

It was also important to maintain the local vibe that Amelia Island is known for and not losing sight of that in the construction of the event was key.

"We always knew we wanted to present a quality mix for our guests, and we look to continue that model of having 'local legends,' as we like to call them," Murphy said. "We would like to see it eventually expand to where local restaurants are getting involved."

Chef Okan Kizilbayir of Salt Restaurant, which is just one of several dining options at The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia

Island has helped orchestrate the cookout weekend and will be one of the featured chefs.

He brings a unique take on the cookout from his past experiences with the Grand Cayman Cookout, which is a similar culinary event hosted by The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman, and is celebrating 15 years in October.

"He is the man behind all the success," Murphy said. "His wealth of knowledge and experience is incredible."

The goal of the showcase is to have something that captures the imagination of every palate, regardless of which foods or flavors peak a person's interest.

Everything from chefs who specialize in farm-to-table, such as Lee Jones with Chef's Garden to Tank Jackson with

Holy City Hogs, who will be roasting a whole hog, and award-winning mixologists will be featured during the event.

The variety of chefs featured has brought about interest from guests both across the First Coast but also throughout the nation, especially those on the East Coast.

"We started to conceive it about a year ago, and all along we knew we wanted to capture the foodie culture that is growing everywhere, including here locally," Murphy said. "Jacksonville, Ponte Vedra and the First Coast in general has become much more of a 'foodie' scene in the last five years."

The Amelia Island Cookout is the main event during the three-day showcase and will take place on Oct. 21 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. on the Oceanfront Lawn at The Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island.

Tickets for the cookout are \$150 per person and will allow guests to be front and center as some of the top chefs bring their best culinary work out of the kitchen and bring it outdoors for a unique cookout feel.