

Captivating Cupcakes in Raleigh: A Dessert Review

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DC Cupcakes, a television show belonging to the TLC Network, features a pair of sisters who opened Georgetown Bakery on Valentine's Day, 2008 in Washington D.C. and, soon after, became widely familiar throughout the area. The first and only cupcakery in the metropolitan city acquired its' own TV show in July of 2010 and even landed a spot on the Oprah show this past December. With TV shows like this one, the craze for the tasty treats has become nationally recognizable and the demand for local cupcake bakeries is high. The Triangle is no exception in the trend of the chic bakeries. Every day, the local bake shops in Raleigh flourish with business and gain popularity by word of mouth. Because of the contradictory opinions on which cupcake shop was the best, I set out to two of the most popular to find the answer for myself.

My first stop was the Cupcake Shoppe Bakery, located on Glenwood Avenue. The shop is famously known as Raleigh's first cupcake boutique and bakery. The pale pink walls set a sweet mood in the bakery and the old-fashioned white countertops complete with an aged cash register only add to the genuine feeling of the space. Besides the posh interior design of the bakery, it also offers what turned out to be my favorite cupcake. The fluffy icing was whipped around the small cake twice, making a suitable amount of frosting. The cake itself was moist and rich. This bakery also offers a separate station in their store providing customers with water, which comes in handy after indulging in one of their rich cupcakes and, in my opinion, is a courteous gesture of appreciation to those who visit their store. The gift wrapping that the Cupcake Shoppe offers for their delectable treats, a choice of pink or white

box completed with a simple, single ribbon and sealed with a Cupcake Shoppe seal, was ideal for any gift. However, Gigi's cupcakes, Raleigh's newest cupcake bakery, offered a more sophisticated present packaging.

Gigi's Cupcakes, located in Oberlin Court, was my second destination of the day. Gigi's is a cupcake franchise that originally began in Nashville, TN in February of 2008. Raleigh holds the first and only store in North Carolina—at least for now. The steadily expanding company has a goal of opening 100 stores across the country, according to their website. During my visit, the bakery was packed with people and the line for a pastry was almost out of the door. Despite the busyness of the shop, the mint green, hot pink and chocolate brown walls create a charming atmosphere. The cupcake that I sampled contained more icing than actual cake, but still proved to be appetizing. However, I deem that the cupcakes offered at this store were not as satisfying as those offered at the Cupcake Shoppe because of the hefty amount of icing. On the other hand, many customers are attracted to this shop because of this aspect in particular. As mentioned before, I believe that Gigi's offered the most stylish gift wrapping. The shop offers a pale green box, which appears to already have wrapping on it, for customers wishing to bring a cake home to a loved one.

After previewing the two most popular cupcakeries in Raleigh, the Cupcake Shoppe proved to have the best cupcake, but Gigi's Cupcakes offered the most chic gift wrapping option. While both bakeries are top of the line, each one does have its perks. So, for future reference, I will visit Glenwood Avenue for a delicious cupcake for myself, and Oberlin Court for a cupcake intended as a gift.

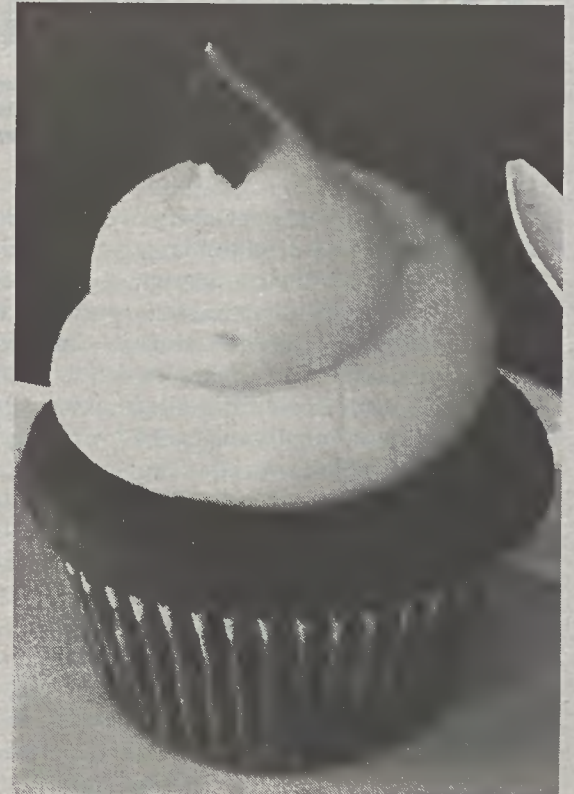
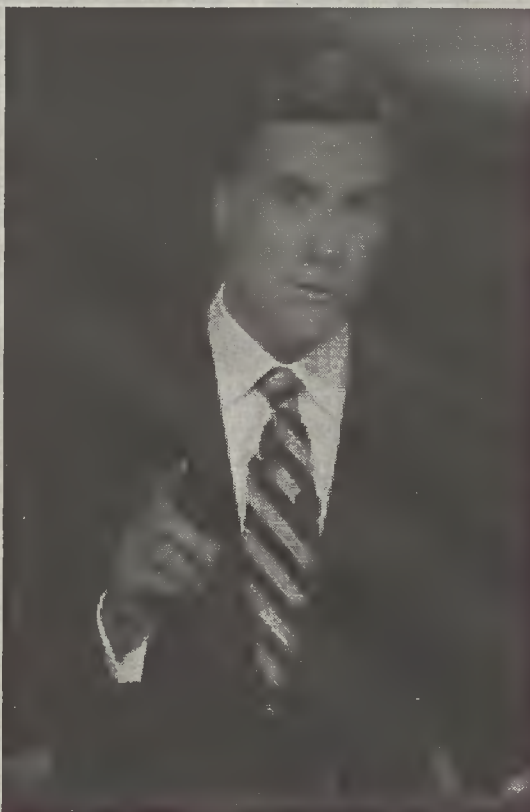


image via Emily Gamiel

Presidential Election 2012: Republicans v. Republicans

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Mitt Romney
image via Getty Images

The next presidential election will not occur until November of 2012, yet people are already talking about who will be the next Republican candidate to contest current Democratic President Barack Obama in the forthcoming race. Although presidential elections only occur every four years, the campaigns wage on for two or more years with drawn-out primaries, numerous debates, and decorated conventions. The elongated primary system has been this way since 1968 when the Democratic National Convention chaotically chose a nominee that did not have the popular support of the party. From then on, each state has held primary elections to ensure more widespread participation.

The Democratic Party essentially has the nomination process already wrapped up with President Obama expected to run again with Biden as his running mate. On the other hand, the Republicans have a wide-open field. Though no major candidates have announced their candidacy, some of the front runners have already emerged.

Mitt Romney: Romney is the former governor of Massachusetts and a successful businessman. He is known for his unsuccessful run as a Republican candidate for the nomination in 2008 and his widely-publicized Mormon faith. He is the person most widely seen as the front runner for the 2012 nomination.

Sarah Palin: Palin is the former governor of Alaska and a political personality widely criticized and praised in the media. Catapulted into the spotlight in 2008 after being chosen as Vice President on the McCain

ticket, Palin has made the most of her media spotlight. She has not publicly commented on her possible run for president in 2012.

Tim Pawlenty: Pawlenty is the former governor of Minnesota, a well known labor lawyer, and vice president of a software company. He has been on a media tour for the past year, promoting much speculation of a possible run in 2012. He is a staunch social conservative, and recently placed fourth in popularity at the Conservative Political Action Conference.

Haley Barbour: Barbour is the current governor of Mississippi who won national popularity after Hurricane Katrina hit the state in 2005. He is known as the former chairman of the Republican National Committee and as a lawyer and lobbyist. While many think he would have the best strategies, they also think he would have trouble winning over minorities in the South due to comments made throughout his career.

Newt Gingrich: Gingrich is the former Speaker of the House from Georgia. He is widely known for his "Contract With America," a return to conservative values with ten proposals for the first 100 days, and his public disputes with Bill Clinton. He is expected to make a decision by March 1 on a potential run in 2012.

While these are the prominent candidates now, the election tide has almost two more full years to turn. New candidates could easily appear while these front runners could fall behind, and therein lies the beauty of politics.