

ALL ABOUT CAKE BUSINESS



*a guide to starting
cake business*

“Ten favourite
Cake Recipes inside”

THOKOZANI CHIRWA MUSACHI

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Cake Recipes inside”**

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All About Cake Business

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Thoko is an amazing baker and a true definition of a hard worker and practice makes perfect. As a young girl she was always eager to try out a new recipe and was always creative. What she shares in *All About Cake Business* is based on her personal experience—she is fearless to even open up to the reader on the mistakes she made along her journey in baking. I hope you find this book helpful.



Yuna Chirwa Chikanda, sister, baker,
Izon Cakes customer

Honestly, I was never a fan of cakes from previous cake experiences until I came across *Izon cakes*. The cakes are so soft, delicious and come with the best creams ever. I am now a fan of cakes, thanks to *Izon cakes*...My nephew even commented saying “*this is the best cake ever*”



Sume Zol Mbewe, Designer,
owner of Zol Styles, Izon Cakes customer

Indeed yummy, not just the decoration art but the taste is first grade, customer care is topnotch none can beat—thanks for making our function unforgettable, the cake was too good #fair prices #tasty cakes# Excellent decoration—only at Izon Cakes.



Ivy Gondwe Kasote, GIS Expert, Gardener
Izon Cakes Customer,

A flavor that is out of this world and a real work of art that was so beautiful is what I found meeting together in the cake made by Thoko. Beautiful and tasty cakes! I never regret having her make a cake for my wife's birthday.



Dumisanie Mambiya, Entrepreneur, Author of *Start*, Izon Cakes customer

The cakes are amazing. Have you ever tried the *Red Velvet Cake*? It's very appetizing and when you start eating you want to finish. Try these cakes and you won't regret.

Tabitha Mlolo, Izon Cakes customer

It's the most delicious cake I have ever tasted!!!!!! You are the best Thoko.

Mwai Amanda Konyani Namangale, Izon Cakes customer

Yayi mwaya patali (you are way ahead) is this cake really baked by you? Ngati magazine mkati (like it's from the magazine) Congrats!!

Mr. J.M. Chirwa (Parent)

Dedication

I dedicate this book to my daughter Arielle Musachi, don't give up on your dreams.

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Introduction

Cake business is booming in Malawi. And there's a reason for the success story! People are always celebrating about something—and they don't want to celebrate alone. They throw parties and invite friends and loved ones to celebrate with them. Be it a birthday, wedding, engagement, valentine's day, anniversary or farewell party—name it, the party is not complete without a beautiful, well designed, baked cake to spice up the occasion.

So, if you happen to know how to bake a professional cake, party organizers will always be knocking your door, asking you to bake a cake for their special occasion. When your cake spice up their celebration, there will always be inquisitive people who can't just eat without making enquires as who baked the delicious cake. Of course, your cake should be well baked and appealing to solicit such comments!

And before you know it; your phone is beeping and ringing continuously as party attendees flood your phone with compliments for a cake well baked. A few days later, people are asking you to bake another cake for their special occasions. You are now a household name in the cake industry and all roads lead to your house.

Your clients smile all the way from your house to their party, carrying a well baked beautifully decorated delicious cake. And they leave you smiling too, because of the money they have dropped into your purse.

And you don't need to be a full-time baker to run a successful cake business. You can be a professional in any career but run a successful cake business too. For example, I'm a professional person with a full time, busy job. But like the average woman in Malawi, I always have time to spend in my kitchen to cook for my family—and even bake something delicious for my loved ones.

So, baking a cake for a client isn't tasking at all. I just have to spend an extra hour or two in my kitchen—and hip, hip, hooray, the job is done!

That extra hour is rewarding as it brings in money that I can use to meet some personal needs, and even family needs. Of course, there's another reward too: an opportunity to bake for my family (You don't expect me to bake a cake for a client and not to use the opportunity to bless my family too!).

A lot of women would love to make extra cash in the comfort of their kitchen. Gone are the days when women were just daydreaming and praying that God would bless them financially through their husbands. Today's woman is advanced; she is a career person with a stable job or business. And cake business is ideal for her because it doesn't demand a lot.

Unlike the traditional businesses that demand more of your time, energy and resources, cake business is so simple because you do it in the comfort of your home—and of course, in your own time. Once people taste your cake and give you a good rating, word spreads around like a bush fire. Everyone—including your friends and relatives—advertises your cakes, and your business goes viral. All of a sudden, clients line up for your cake services. Cake business becomes a cash cow that adds extra cash into your purse.

You might think I am just another academic theorist with no experience; but hold on because I have considerable hands-on experience in baking cakes and selling them. I share my experience in cake business in this book so that I can encourage my fellow women to go into cake business—a business they can do in the comfort of their homes.

My journey in the cake business, however, has not been a smooth one. I've had many ups and downs but was determined enough to learn from my mistakes and move on. It is said that you can get it if you really want it. I was determined to make it and I always picked myself up whenever I fell. I finally had a safe landing, and I can boast that I now have a successful cake business that brings in extra cash into my purse. If I could do it, then you can also do it! Or to use President Idi Amin language, 'If I did it, then you can also did it'.

Where It All Began

Perhaps I've to begin from where it all started. Once upon a time I was nine years old. I watched my mum bake in the house and I was intrigued. I bombarded her with a lot of questions about baking. My mum could no longer ignore my interest in baking; so one Saturday afternoon she dispatched me to her friend's house (we didn't have a cooker by then). I discovered upon arrival that my mum had arranged a class for me to learn baking.

The house had a professional cook who took me through a three-hour session of how to bake a cake. I was taught through 'monkey see, monkey do' schooling. I was asked to watch carefully everything she was doing as she explained every procedure

and the ingredients she was using. She took ingredients, measured them, put them in a bowl, mix them up, and finally placed the dough into the oven.

Thereafter I was asked to do exactly as I had seen her do. The nine-year-old girl squared up, took the bull by the horn, seized the opportunity, and with zeal and excitement went about doing exactly—so I thought—as my teacher had done. And my first cake came out of the oven, yummy and hot, and was greeted by my smiling face!

I walked back home smiling from ear to ear, my freshly baked cake in my hands. My mum welcomed the new chef into the house with pride. I carefully placed my trophy into her expectant hands, and sat down with the smile of a winner. How proud I was, watching my family members eating and enjoying the cake cooked by the youngest chef in the house!

Don't ask me if it were a good one or not; but from the way everyone congratulated me as they ate the cake, it must have been the best cake they had ever eaten! However, I would soon discover that my family must have been patriotic when they congratulated me because the cakes I began to bake in the house often turned out to be disasters. That's when I realized that baking was not as easy as I had thought it would be.

My cakes suffered from inconsistencies because I couldn't get the ingredients right most of the time. I often put in more or less of a particular ingredient—and the cakes were often messed up. But I wasn't discouraged at all; I kept on baking and perfecting my skills.

I looked forward to perfecting my baking skills in secondary school because I had heard that Home Economics class teaches baking. Unfortunately, I went to a private secondary school that didn't have a Home Economics class. But I didn't give up learning; I decided to perfect my baking on my own through trial and error.

So, I continued baking during my secondary school days and continued when I went to college. Every time I attended a birthday party, I would pay attention to how the cake looked like and tasted. I was fascinated with the design of the cake, especially the decorations. I was inquisitive enough to learn that cake decoration was done with icing sugar. But I didn't know how it was done, and I wished someone could teach me how to do it. However, I couldn't find a person to teach me.

I decided to take matters into my own hands one day. It was during my college days. I bought icing sugar and was ready to decorate my first cake. To my surprise and delight, the back of the packet contained instructions on how to use the icing sugar

to decorate a cake! My experiment was made simpler as I just followed the instructions to the letter—and there it was: my first decorated cake!

The decorations came out so well—so I thought (remember dust is yourself!)—that I felt I could now bake a birthday cake and decorate it accordingly. That obstacle overcome, I was now confident I could compete in the cake business.

My college days over, I got a job and stayed with my elder sister in Lilongwe. One day I decided to pull a surprise at my workplace. I baked a cake, decorated it nicely, and took it to the office. I invited my colleagues to the ‘cake’ party. As they munched the decorated cake, my colleagues were grinning ear to ear and could not help but comment. “Who baked this cake?” one said with a mouthful of cake. “I like the icing; it’s spot on!” another one said, his mouth lip-sticked with the colorful icing.

“It’s my baking!” I exclaimed.

I received compliments from everyone. I went back home happy that my baking had now matured. It was a matter of days before I could turn professional. And surely, I got my first professional order within a month. A work colleague ordered a birthday cake!

Imagine the excitement as I baked my first commercial cake. It was no small achievement to be paid for baking a cake. My confidence grew and I quickly put an advert on the gate of our house, advertising my baking services. I got another client—a couple that wanted a wedding cake. It wasn’t the wedding cake that you see in city weddings. The couple was looking for a simple cake for a village wedding. So, it was no big deal baking it. However, I was proud that I had managed to get a client for my baking services.

The door was finally open: orders were continuously coming in, especially for birthday cakes. Instead of being an exciting time for my baking business, it turned out to be a challenging moment because some clients were making impossible demands. They wanted cake designs that were complicated, and some had specifications that were almost impossible to make.

So, I went back to class to learn more about baking so I could meet the impossible demands of my clients. It wasn’t easy because I lacked a mentor. It was self-education, often relying on the internet for my baking lessons. I still struggled with consistence as I continued baking; this compromised the quality of my cakes. My greatest challenge was getting the right combination of the ingredients. I often baked three or four times before getting the right quality. Of course, my family was delighted to eat the discarded cakes while my clients got the highest quality.

It was a trial and error approach. But I persisted until I mastered the skill and became an expert. Some people noticed my expertise and began asking me to teach them how to bake cakes. I began to do a one-on-one mentorship for free. As the numbers grew, I realized that more women wanted to venture into cake business but didn't know how. They wanted someone to teach them. That's what motivated me to write this book.

This book is a simple guide to help you with the basics for starting your own cake business. I have shared tips for starting a cake business from the scratch. Of course, I have also shared my personal journey in the cake business—how I started, the mistakes I made, and how I have succeeded. This book could be the missing link to your success in cake business. So, sit down and relax as you enjoy reading the book that will usher you into a successful cake business.

1

Knowledge is Everything

“The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing,” said Socrates. You can’t dive blindly into the cake business and expect to succeed. You need adequate knowledge. Otherwise, you are likely to struggle and give up. People often see what others do and conclude that it’s so easy that you can also do it without anybody’s help. So, you copy what other people are doing. You think it is doable because everyone else is doing it. However, when the tire hits the road, you wake up only to discover that it’s not as easy as you thought. You struggle and finally throw in the towel.

Don’t get me wrong here. I am not saying it is wrong to venture into a business that others are doing. My point is: don’t just copy and paste someone’s business. Take time to get all the information and knowledge about the business. Interestingly, the more people join a particular business, the greater the competition, and the greater the need for you to be an expert if you are going to survive the competition.

Competition in the market is both good and bad. It is good because it promotes quality in the product or service being offered. But if you don’t constantly improve the quality of the cakes you are making, you lose clients to those who are ever improving the quality of their cakes.

If you lack adequate knowledge in cake business, your products and services will be of low quality and you won’t survive the competition on the market. You cannot afford to venture into cake business ignorantly. You need all the knowledge to survive the competition on the market.

Resourcefulness

Resourcefulness is vital when starting a cake business. You have to be very resourceful. Just like a farmer doesn’t begin farming until he has figured out all the resources he would need in that growing season, the person who ventures into cake

business should know the resources that would be needed, and how and where she will get them.

My passion for baking ushered me into the baking business. However, it wasn't a smooth sailing journey. I had mixed fortunes as I baked at home. Interestingly, I only knew how to bake a basic vanilla cake; but I had little knowledge about recipes. I would use 3 cups of cake flour and 3 tea spoons of baking powder. The next day I would use 4 cups of flour and 3 tea spoons of baking powder. The following day I would change the mixture again. It was a guess game and my baking lacked consistence.

One day I would bake very yummy and moist cakes—delicious to eat and everyone would congratulate me. The next day my cake would come out raw and doughy (*yachinsima nkati*) and no one would enjoy eating it. But I couldn't figure out why my baking was inconsistent.

My passion kept me going despite the setbacks. I kept encouraging myself that sooner or later I shall get it right. I always dreamt of having a cake business, so I never gave up. I felt I just needed time to perfect my baking skills before my dream would come true.

I decided to start with birthday cakes. But I didn't know a lot of things. I didn't know how to frost a cake, so I sought help from experienced people. But people were not willing to help me; so I embarked on a journey of self-education. I bought snow white icing sugar made by Universal Industries—and guess what—luck was on my side! An angel had placed recipes for royal and butter cream icing at the back of the packet. I went to work as soon as I reached home: I tried out the recipes and—boom—I decorated my first cake!

You don't have to struggle for recipes today. The internet has brought recipes closer home; in fact, they are only a phone away. You just have to pick up your smart phone and Google, YouTube or Facebook. You'll find all the information about cakes and recipes.

As I close this chapter, let me give you tips that will help you start and grow your cake business.

- Read as many books and articles about baking (cakes) as you can. Of course, don't forget to read the recipes that are printed on the packets of flour, icing sugar, mixed fruits etc. Try out whatever new thing you learn. Remember: Education never stops, so keep educating yourself.

- Watch baking video tutorials on YouTube—you might as well stop wasting your precious time and data downloading or forwarding less useful videos. The internet is loaded with enough information to steer your cake business to success.
- If someone is conducting cake baking lessons, humble yourself and attend. You might grasp a tip that can transform your business. Such trainings help one to have hands-on experience and gives you a platform to interact with other bakers and you may benefit from their experience
- Bake new things all the time. When you get a new recipe, try it out. The more you bake, the better you get. Practice makes perfect.

2

You need Capital

Business requires resources; so is cake business. You need money to buy the right equipment for baking. Apart from investing in knowledge, you should be ready to sacrifice some money to acquire good equipment. High quality baking is a product of good equipment—the right utensils that perform the exact thing you want.

I will tell you the right materials and equipment you need to invest in. I will also list down the shops where you can get equipment and ingredients for baking. An oven is a must for baking. If you don't have a cooker, you need to get one. But if you don't have money to get a modern cooker, you might start with a low budget mini cooker. You can also use a charcoal brazier if you are adventurous enough. I am a member of Bakers Chat Forum group on Facebook and I was amazed that our friends in Nigeria have local ovens. They use sand to control the heat; it's so fascinating. I hope engineers in Malawi will be able to produce them in the future.

1. Ingredients

A good cake is a product of the right ingredients. There are different qualities of ingredients out there, but if you want a high quality cake, then go for high quality ingredients. I have bought cakes that were made out of cheap ingredients, and they taste terrible. You taste a strong odor of cooking oil on one side and you have flour that smells like weevils or cockroach poop on the other side...phew. Worse still, I have seen a well decorated cake that tastes awful.

Don't compromise on the quality of ingredients if you want to excel in cake business. Your customer wants a quality cake—well blended and flavored to melt on their tongue. If one is celebrating, she doesn't want anything to mess up that occasion, let alone a terrible cake. It's better to use highest quality ingredients and make the client pay more to be happy than use cheap ingredients just because you want to charge less but spoil someone's celebration.

In any celebration, organizers go for quality: from hiring of decorators, Master of Ceremonies, photography—you name it. So, your baking ought to be of high quality too. Don't go for smelly cooking oil; don't use cheap butter, don't use cheap baking

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