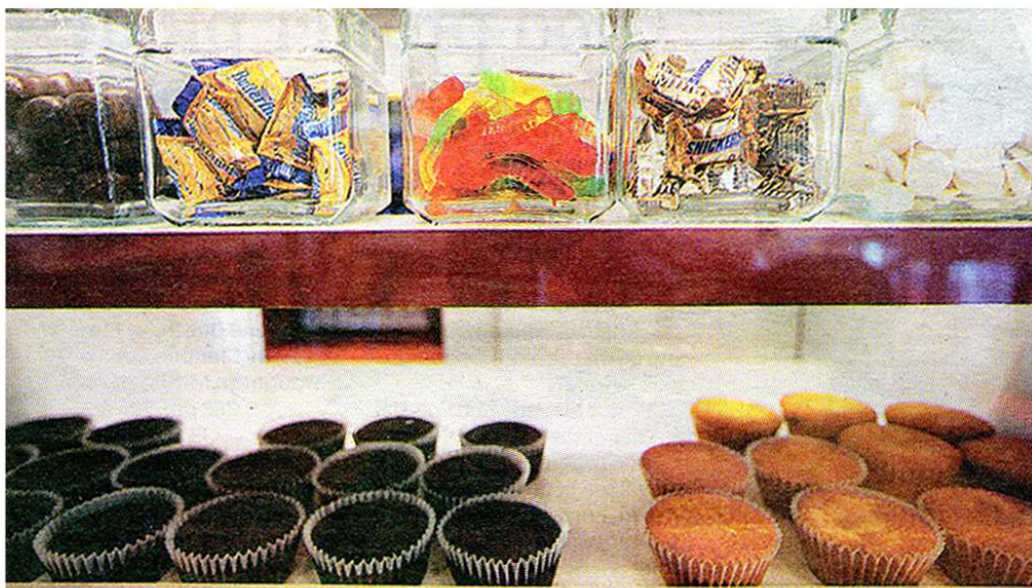




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SHORT ORDERS



PHOTOS BY YOON S. BYUN/GLOBE STAFF

Step up to the cupcake bar

Ho-hum, another day, another new cupcake joint . . . is not what you'll be saying when you enter Treat Cupcake Bar, recently opened in Needham. Sure, there's a bright, jazzy interior done up in tasteful, festive, warm tones by Boston designers Cheryl and Jeffrey Katz, and a menu that includes such irresistibles as Chunky Monkey and Mint-O-Green. And unlike some trendy spots, Treat sells cupcakes that are actually delicious. But what sets this shop apart from the crowd is hidden in its name: It's not just a bakery, but a



Ashley Delprete, 4, of Hanover samples her invention at Treat Cupcake Bar in Needham.

cupcake bar, where patrons can customize their goodies by choosing a cake, a frosting, and up to three "treats" (such as M&Ms, gummy worms, Oreos, and so on) to be mixed into that frosting. The resulting creation is served in a two-compartment dish — one side holds the naked cake and the other your cup of frosting, to be dipped, schmear, or spooned. Owner David LaLiberte took a circuitous route to becoming a bakery owner: He was once senior equity trader for Fidelity's Magellan Fund and went on to work as head of the trading department at Vinik Asset Management, retiring from finance in 2005. He decided he wanted to own a small business, and cupcakes looked like a good bet. LaLiberte believes Treat is the first of its kind anywhere, but given its immediate success — every cupcake flew out the door on opening day — we're betting it won't be the last. *Treat Cupcake Bar, 1450 Highland Ave., Needham, 781-444-4995, www.treatcupcakebar.com. Ready made cupcakes \$3.25 each; customized cupcake \$4.25.*

JANE DORNBUSCH



SWEET SUCCESS

To see a video of Treat Cupcake Bar, go to www.boston.com/food.