

true confections

There's no need to sugarcoat Kara Cashion's passion for things sweet. She does it beautifully as a sugar artist and founder of her own confectionery business near Ottawa, Ontario. CW talked to Kara during her holiday sugar rush.

CW: How did you come to launch your business?

Kara: My love affair with sugar began when I was a teen working as a nanny for neighborhood families. One Christmas, I made gingerbread crafts with the kids and was inspired.

I designed some mini gingerbread house ornaments and walked shop to shop asking owners if they'd carry them. My first year out, I sold more than a thousand. Now, 24 years later, I feel like a kid in my own personal candy shop. Through my business, Home Sweet Home (sugarcubes.ca and cinnamonsentiments.com), I sell handmade confections to coffee, tea and gift stores, caterers, party planners and customers across the U.S. and Canada.

CW: What does your ultrasweet product line include?

Kara: Along with gingerbread, decorated sugar cubes are among my most popular items. Making them is like painting on a tiny canvas. Each individual cube gets its own delicate embellishment with royal icing. My white and brown Christmas cubes feature wreaths, reindeer, candy canes, snowflakes and more. Instead of one lump or two, we produce hundreds of each design.

I continued to think small and added miniature cookies in seasonal shapes, elaborately trimmed with frosting. My real labor of love is an edible Advent calendar I dreamed up. It's made with 24 mini cookies, so you can

Learn to decorate
sugar cubes like Kara's
see page 25

“My love affair with sugar began when I was a teen. One Christmas, I made gingerbread crafts ... and was inspired.”



Photo: Jim Wilson/IDA-MKE

Eye candy that Kara Cashion fashions delights all the senses. Her luscious line includes edible gift tags, mini cookies, shaped and decorated sugar pieces, and a platter-size gingerbread Advent calendar (opposite).



nibble your way to Christmas. Just one takes five days to finish, so I make these by special order.

For variety, I introduced Karamels, original-recipe caramel candies I make in a copper pot. My latest product is Cinnamon Sentiments—petite sticky buns. As a holiday novelty, I form the pull-apart rolls into a Christmas tree shape.

CW: When does demand for your goodies peak?

Kara: From late August to early December, things get really busy in my home workshop, a garage we converted into an efficient commercial kitchen. I call in my “sugar rescue squad”—local moms who help me part time, a couple of my girlfriends and my mother, Joan, our candy-making expert.

Since we start on orders in late summer, we play Christmas music to get us in a festive mood. The room’s

sweet on trivia?

Jakub Krystof Rad, a sugar refiner in Bohemia, got the idea of selling sugar in cubes in 1841 after his wife injured her hand while trying to cut a huge lump of sugar into pieces.

...

In the 1870s, Henry Tate, an English sugar magnate, patented the method of dicing sugar into small cubes.

...

Sugar cubes are made by dissolving sugar crystals in water, forming a syrupy solution. The crystals are pressed together into molds with the syrup binding them. Cubes are then dried in microwave ovens and packaged.

...

In the 16th century, aristocrats would give wedding guests sugar cubes in ornate gift boxes as a sign of their wealth—a precursor to today’s wedding favors.

...

Brides in ancient Greece believed placing a lump of sugar into one of their wedding gloves would bring sweetness to the marriage.



so charming

Candy cane cubes inspire a sugar high.

Make a splash at a holiday tea with these fanciful cubes, created by Kara Cashion. They're easy enough even for beginners, she says.

"They look so impressive, people often think they were trimmed by a master cake decorator," she notes. "But it's really a pretty easy process, and it's OK to eat your mistakes!"

For detailed instructions on creating your own candy cane decorated sugarcubes, pick up the December / January issue of Country Woman Magazine.



Gifts of good taste from Kara's kitchen range from cinnamon buns to boxed sets of holiday sweets. Helping with the merrymaking are her mom, Joan (middle picture), and friend Barb.

You could say my life's a sweet dream come true.

always filled with a heavenly sugar-and-spice aroma. Buddies in my yoga class kid me about wearing cookie "perfume." My husband, Brent, owns a marketing company, so he's my right hand when I need logos, packaging or a website update. In a pinch, he's even wrapped candies.

CW: How much is your work influenced by your own sweet cravings?

Kara: Actually, I don't have an overly active sweet tooth. I'm a healthy-eating kind of girl. As much as possible, I use organic shortening, flour, eggs, cane sugar and spices in our baked goods, supporting hardworking independent farmers. Our icing is not exactly "healthy," but we're working on it!

My motto is: "Only ugly sugar is bad for you." That's why I try to make my treats as lovely as possible. I figure if you're going to indulge in a little something sweet, it should delight the taste buds and nourish the spirit.

CW: After the holiday season, do you relax and recover from your sugar buzz?

Kara: My business keeps me going year-round. I've created sugar cube and cookie collections with motifs to fit various holidays, seasons and celebrations. They're great as gifts and add a special touch to tea parties, showers and dinners. People are blown away by how cute they are! 

