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# By cookbook co-author Shelley Lance

The *Dahlia Bakery Cookbook* goes on sale October 23. This is our fourth cookbook, and every book I have co-authored with Tom has been a long, hard journey that ends with the excitement of the “on sale date” and a real book that we can hold in our hands.

You could say the journey towards this book began over 25 years ago, when I first started working for Tom at Café Sport. I was the line cook eager to jump into the baker’s spot at any opportunity, and that’s where I learned to make Tom’s all-yolks-and-heavy-cream crème caramel. Years later, when Tom opened Dahlia Lounge, he told me he envisioned a coconut cream pie on the menu, so I tried out recipes until we found a version we liked for opening day. In addition to the coconut cream pie, the Dahlia dessert menu boasted that same ultra rich crème caramel as well as the pear tart with caramel sauce and the apple dumpling. I continued as Tom’s pastry chef for almost a decade, but then moved on to become quality control chef and cookbook co-author before the beautiful pastry jewel in our crown, the Dahlia Bakery, opened in 2001.

I have always considered myself to be a pretty good savory cook and a good rustic baker. But as the number of Tom Douglas Restaurants expanded, as the volume of pastries increased, as the pastry kitchen became larger and more professional, we hired people I consider to be “real” pastry chefs, polished pros, to handle the job. (Not to mention our professional bread bakers and bread chefs and our gorgeous rustic breads. However, except for the English muffin recipe, the bread baker’s handiwork will have to wait for another cookbook!)

A few years ago, when Tom came to me with the idea of writing a Dahlia Bakery book, I knew I would have to channel my “inner pastry chef” again. The challenge for me was to work with pastry pros like Garrett Melkonian (who labored on a big chunk of the recipe development for this book) and our current pastry chef Stacy Fortner to

somehow transform our highly professional, technique-heavy Dahlia Bakery recipes into home-size recipes for the home cook in a home kitchen.

This was a big challenge and at times a long uphill slog as, with the help of my recipe-testing team, Julie Hartley and Beth Minker, we found that sometimes recipes didn't work as they should and had to be tweaked and tested again and, alas, again. But the work was also a joy.

Here are some of the joys:

- The delight of taking something from the test kitchen oven, tasting it, and finding it to be pitch-perfect, like Garrett's rich and deeply chocolate tart or Stacy's superb Kentucky bourbon pecan pie, both with the best ever flaky crust.
- The relaxed fun of hanging in the test kitchen with Julie and Beth at the end of our day, snacking on un-frosted cupcakes or snatching bites of still-hot white cheddar and pesto grilled cheese sandwiches.
- The comfort of knowing we could always rely on cheerful advice from the Dahlia Workshop bakers and retail Dahlia Bakery manager Molly Melkonian.
- The excitement of working with our brilliant, super-nice photographer Ed Anderson and our brilliant, super-nice photographer's assistant Sarah Flotard during our December photo shoot, much of it while wearing our winter coats, hanging out for hours in the loading dock behind Dahlia, with the garage door wide open for the best light. Wait till you see these photos!!
- The familiar pleasure of sitting at the computer with Tom Douglas, as he and I do for every book, as he polishes his thoughts, memories and stories, and adds his unique voice to the book.
- The admittedly OCD satisfaction of working with our tireless William Morrow editor, Cassie Jones, who was never too impatient to go over recipe and technique details with me one more time.

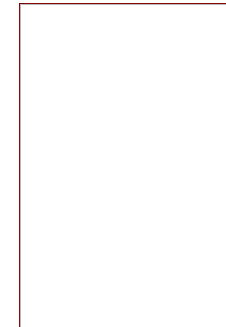
Getting to the finish line with The Dahlia Bakery Cookbook was indeed a tough journey, but a sweet one. I'm proud to have worked on a project that represents and belongs to everyone in our hardworking company. But I especially hope the Dahlia Workshop bakers and Dahlia Bakery retail staff who show up to work day after day to roll out pastry, shape English muffins, load baking sheets into the convection oven, decorate cookies, fill pie shells, box up layer cakes, chat with customers, and ring up sales will be proud of this book. They are the heroes of the Dahlia Bakery, and this is their cookbook.

I'm anticipating the moment when the new cookbooks show up, hot off the printing press in their crisp paper jackets, and we can line them up for sale in the Dahlia Bakery and in all the Tom Douglas joints. I hope you, our readers and customers, will enjoy this book as much as we enjoyed working on it. We love bringing you a little "Sweetness in Seattle" every time, whether you're picking up a few chocolate chunk cookies or a few of our brand new Dahlia Bakery Cookbooks!

All my best,

Shelley

PS: The forecast looks sunny for our [final salmon supper tomorrow night](#), hope you will join us in the

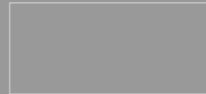


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