

dine

TASTE
TEST

CUPCAKES

They're cute, sweet, portable, portion-controlled and fork-free. No wonder the cupcake trend won't quit. So as a public service, we donated our time to find the Bethesda area's best cupcakes. Mark Ramsdell, head instructor of the pastry arts program at L'Academie de Cuisine in Gaithersburg, was the expert judge for the blind taste test. Members of the *Bethesda Magazine* staff were also judges. We bought yellow cupcakes with chocolate icing at five local shops and had ourselves a grown-up sugar fest. (Unfortunately, we were unable to include Fancy Cakes by Leslie at 4939 Elm St. in Bethesda, as it was slated to open after our deadline.) The winner was Bethesda's Just Cakes, preferred by the overwhelming majority of tasters, including Ramsdell. CakeLove, the Silver Spring bakery owned by lawyer-turned-baker-turned-Food Network star Warren Brown, was the clear loser. Let's just say it was all in a day's work.



PATRICE GILBERT

CUPCAKE & RANK	ADDRESS/PHONE #	PRICE PER CUPCAKE	L'ACADEMIE DE CUISINE'S MARK RAMSDELL SAYS...
1st PLACE JUST CAKES	4849 Rugby Ave., Bethesda 301-718-5111	\$3.25	Creamy, ooey-goey appearance; cocoa-flavored icing; light crumb and moist cake
2nd PLACE WHOLE FOODS	5269 River Road, Bethesda 301-984-4860 (locations also in Rockville, Silver Spring, Gaithersburg)	\$1.25	Nice piping, creamy appearance; icing and cake are light in texture
3rd PLACE BREADS UNLIMITED	6914 Arlington Road, Bethesda 301-656-2340 (location also in Silver Spring)	\$1.15	Dark, shiny icing; moistest cake
4th PLACE SPRING MILL BREAD CO.	4961 Elm St., Bethesda 301-654-7970 (locations also in Gaithersburg, Rockville)	\$2.00	Gritty but chocolaty icing; cake has tight, almost dry texture
5th PLACE CAKELOVE	935 Ellsworth Drive, Silver Spring 301-565-2253	\$3.25	Moist cake, but icing softened too quickly, making it difficult to eat