



Susan Carley, sitting on right, and her team have a lot to offer – coffee, dessert, breakfast and lunch in the heart of the Oakleigh district. Cream & Sugar has a nationwide demand for an assortment of its cake ball flavors.

Everyone Needs a Little Cream & Sugar

Susan Carley and her husband, Kevin, love coffee.

“Our earliest days together in New Orleans were spent hanging out together in coffee shops on Magazine Street,” Susan Carley said. “When our first child was born, we were living in Atlanta and our favorite outing was to get her all dressed up and go hang out at Caribou Coffee.”

So it was only natural that after moving back to Mobile in 2003, they should open a coffee shop of their own. After opening the Palette Café in the Mobile Museum of Art in 2007, the couple started looking for sites for a second location. They found a building in the Oakleigh Garden District that had formerly housed Guido’s restaurant, and had originally been a house connected to a corner store.

“It always intrigued me that the charming cottage home with the front porch and stoop that had been built in 1876 was overshadowed by the corner store which had the

intriguing corner entrance,” she said.

While they leased out the portion of the building with the corner entrance, now Kitchen On George, the Carleys decided the house with the porch was the perfect space to open a coffee and dessert shop. That shop, Cream & Sugar, has now been in business nearly five years and is the Mobile Area Chamber’s Small Business of the Month.

“We knew the neighborhood and the Midtown community would embrace a locally-owned coffee shop, and it did,” said Carley, who runs the business. “It blossomed from just coffee and dessert to now serving breakfast and lunch seven days a week.”

Carley credits the setting for part of their success – the quaint cottage with its picket fence, original floors, a loft for book clubs and outdoor seating on the porch. Another part of their successful formula is what’s inside the building – expert baristas

churning out coffee drinks made from locally roasted beans, and a menu that features breakfast burritos with Conecuh sausage, crab quiche, Cammie’s Old Dutch ice cream and cake balls in 25 flavors.

“We were the first to introduce cake balls to Mobile back in 2009,” she said, “and we are now selling them online nationwide.”

The shop has become home base for Mobilians on Bikes, a group that gathers there regularly for bike rides through Midtown and downtown. “The biking community, with their regular rides and supportive spirit of Midtown, really kept us going during the first few years as we tried to build our repeat business in an area that gets no drive-by traffic,” Carley said. “Without the bikers, we may not have made it to our five-year mark.”

Carley says a business plan is important for new entrepreneurs, and flexibility in that plan is sometimes necessary. Original estimates for

customer traffic at Cream & Sugar were off and they had to spend more time and money on marketing and advertising to get the word out. Now the business has a strong enough customer base to stay open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week, with hopes of adding even later hours.

“We had to try harder to get the people in the front door,” Carley said. “But once they stepped in Cream & Sugar, they were usually hooked. Our repeat business is awesome and our regulars are incredibly supportive.”

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