

Dita Von Cheesecake

Cake maker Charlotte White talks to **Laura Price** about burlesque, Borg cubes, and *The Great British Bake Off*



Charlotte White's Cherry Shakewell cake



Charlotte White, 31, has a lot of strings to her bow. When she's not making wedding cakes she's busy teaching brides how to make their own, and she has even found time to write her first recipe book, *Burlesque Baking*. She lives in London with her husband Chris and their cats, Sid and Nancy.

When did you first learn to bake?

My nana got me into it. I was six or seven when I found her Mary Berry cookbook. She had ticked the recipe for Angel cakes – the ones with the little wings on top. That was the first thing I remember baking, and I've been doing it ever since.

How did you turn it into a career?

It happened by accident. In 2007 a couple of friends were getting married and they didn't have a budget, so I made them a tower of 150 cupcakes as their wedding

cake. They loved it and said I should do it as a job. I laughed at them because I never would have imagined anybody would pay me for cakes – I just come with cake.

What inspired Burlesque Baking?

I've always loved going to burlesque shows and we even had burlesque at our wedding. It's such a strong female art form. All the cakes in the book are inspired by famous burlesque dancers and their dresses. The final showstopper is inspired by Dita Von Teese. The design is all just piping tiny dots, which is a very simple technique, but when you're piping lots of them it's going to take you about two and a half to three hours.

Will the average baker be able to make these elaborate cakes?

Absolutely! What I'm trying to show people is that with a few well-placed *dragées* and a bit of edible glitter, you can really make a very stunning cake. The first one is named after the incredibly fabulous showgirl Cherry Shakewell. It's a very simple idea of using white chocolate cigarillos, which you just line up around the outside of the cake, then you tie a big bow around it and chuck a load of glitter on the cherries.

How did your company Restoration Cake come about?

I started the company in 2009 – it is called Restoration Cake because of my love of history and the Restoration period. I carried on with my job as a personal assistant, but in 2011 I was made redundant. I'd been saying for months that I couldn't wait to leave the job and run my cake business full-time, and I never looked back.

You've baked some pretty interesting wedding cakes. What is the most unusual one you've made?

I made the wedding cake for the UK's very first Klingon wedding at a *Star Trek* convention. The couple really liked the Borg Cube cake, which had been quite popular online. It is essentially a ship in the shape of a cube that the baddies fly around in, so I said, "What we need is a tiered Borg cube cake." I'm not a big *Star Trek* fan.

Tell us about your appearance on the last series of The Great British Bake Off.

As a hobby, my husband Chris and I do a lot of 1940s nostalgia events. We're part of a little network of people who enjoy doing the same thing, and one of them heard from the BBC that they needed to talk about bread during the war, so I got to go down to the docks and record a piece. If somebody says to you, "Do you want to be on *The Great British Bake Off*?" you don't say no. It was wonderful to do.

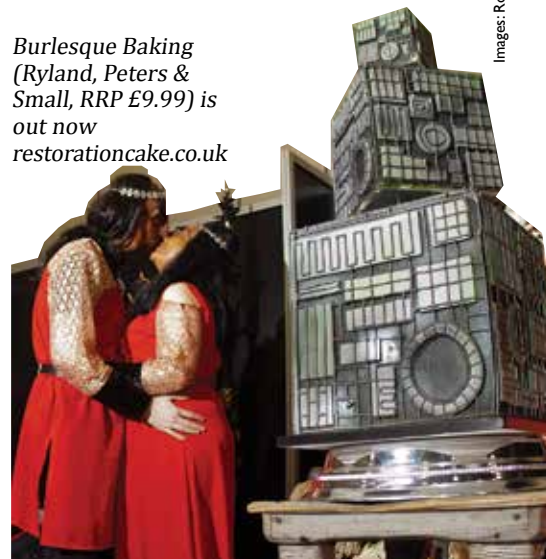
Did you have to dress up to film it?

The funny thing is, I do genuinely dress retro – normally a weird hybrid of 40s and 50s clothes. So I went there in one of my favourite new dresses with my hair up in victory rolls and suddenly I realised I was standing there talking about the war, looking like I was *in* the war.

What has been the highlight of your career so far?

My real claim to fame was making Dame Vera Lynn's 95th birthday cake. I've never been prouder. She took my hand and she looked in my eyes and said, "Oh you're so clever, thank-you so much," just like your nan would. She makes you feel like you're the only person in the room. ☑

Burlesque Baking (Ryland, Peters & Small, RRP £9.99) is out now
restorationcake.co.uk



A happy couple with their three-tiered *Star Trek* cake