

U Buy It, U-Bake It

Growing up in the 1980s and '90s in the Midwest, convenience foods were the norm. Childhood family suppers were semi-homemade, one-pot meals like tuna casserole, Chef Boyardee Pizza Kits, and CrockPot roasts—foods that I still nostalgically crave from time to time. But it was dessert where my mother really excelled, creating nearly any shape of cake that I could imagine, from ballet slippers to a hot air balloon, with just a boxed mix and a little food coloring.

Don't get me wrong, my mother was and is a superb cook who put a complete meal on the table for a family of five most nights, then did all the clean up herself. An impressive feat by today's standards, though her style of cooking is now considered passé by a new generation of mothers with their enlightened organic, preservative-free mindset.

But can modern cooks “have their cake and eat it, too?” With Grand Central Bakery's new U-Bake line of frozen pie crusts, puff pastry, and cookie dough—all recently given to Diane for sampling—we found it easy to make homemade tasting desserts from all natural ingredients, with the added convenience of dough that needs only defrosting and baking.

Available at their stores in Portland and Seattle, the U-Bake line is mixed, rolled, shaped, and frozen just like the pastries for sale at Grand Central Bakeries. Made from Shepherd's Grain sustainably grown flour, cage-free eggs, and butter from Larsen's creamery, these premium doughs allow you to easily create flaky pies, puff pastry favorites, such as palmiers, and warm-from-the-oven cookies at home—all with a natural buttery taste and professionally prepared quality.

As a late spring treat, try tossing together chunks of rhubarb and halved Oregon strawberries with a little sugar, flour, cinnamon and ground cloves, for a delicious filling for a U-Bake pie crust. In the time it takes the oven to heat, the filling can be prepared and the defrosted pie dough can be nestled into the pie plate without even needing a rolling pin. Get creative with a lattice top, or simply lay the second sheet of dough over top, make a couple of slits and crimp the edges, to form a double-crust pie. A new generation of mothers now has quality chocolate chip-oatmeal cookies at their fingertips, pre-shaped and ready for the oven. And for dinner, a potpie topped with flaky puff pastry is as easy as, um, pie.

For store locations, visit grandcentralbakery.com.

