



**Elisa Strauss** founded Confetti Cakes in 2000. She is a graduate of Vassar College and the Institute of Culinary Education (ICE). Prior to culinary school, she worked as a designer for Ralph Lauren. In fact, it was a cake she made for Ralph and the heaps of praise it received from fashion-industry notables that inspired her to bring her design talents to the kitchen full time.

Her creations have appeared on the *TODAY Show*, *Sex and the City*, *The View*, and *The Martha Stewart Show*, as well as in countless magazines. She won the grand prize on Food Network's "Extreme Cake Challenge" and was selected as one of America's Top Ten Pastry Chef's in Pastry Art & Design in 2008. She has released two books, *The Confetti Cakes Cookbook* and *Confetti Cakes for Kids*.

In 2010, Elisa stopped making cakes for clients to focus her business on online tutorials, teaching, product design, and special consulting projects. She is an active board member and a supporter of Icing Smiles. She also serves on the advisory council at ICE.



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# Elisa Strauss



**A**fter years of conquering the cake world of New York with her realistic, sculpted creations, Elisa Strauss turned to teaching and consulting to help a newer generation of cake artists blossom. Her newest venture, a line of cake kits, allows the home baker the chance to create a realistic-looking cake just like she made at her signature shop, Confetti Cakes. Her first kit release in early 2021 immediately sold out, and she's back with her newest version: the doughnut cake! We had a chance to catch up with Elisa and find out more about her journey from cake designer to cake kit entrepreneur.

**American Cake Decorating:** What made you decide to change directions from cake designer to consultant/teacher?

**Elisa Strauss:** Although I loved creating custom cakes for clients and the challenge it presented each week, the long hours and stress of deliveries took its toll on me. After 10 years, I was looking for a new challenge, and with the birth of my first child, it was a natural progression to teaching. The hours were more consistent and the

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projects I taught were predictable (no deliveries in New York City!). Plus, I LOVE teaching. Even when I was producing 15 cakes a week, I was also juggling teaching in the culinary schools and often traveling to teach workshops, etc. Then, consulting was a natural progression from teaching. Instead of teaching how to tier a wedding cake or sculpt a dog, I was able to guide companies through building their businesses with my experience with creating products, marketing, and executing experiences, all to do with cake!

**ACD: What do you miss most about being a cake designer?**

**ES:** I still consider myself a cake designer first. When I design a tutorial, video, social media post, or one of my cake kits, I'm always looking at what people want to make out of sugar and cake and

how to make it extra special. I do miss being a part of my clients' celebrations, but, luckily, I have three kids that keep me busy with all of their events!

**ACD: How did you make that transition?**

**ES:** Slowly! I really believe everything happens for a reason. And everything I have done before this has led me into my latest venture. First, I had a short career as a textile designer, then a custom cake designer, which led me to publish two cake-decorating books, produce a line of silicone molds with Marvelous Molds, develop a YouTube Channel, and create five videos with Craftsy. Then, I had a few consulting jobs that taught me more about the business side of things, along with recipe testing and trend forecasting. All this teaching, writing, creating, and learning has led me to create my own line of cake kits.

**ACD: How did you come up with the idea for cake kits?**

**ES:** Honestly, I feel like I have been working on this for the last decade or more! Even when I was studying art in college, I have always loved package design and kits of things. In the last 10 years, with the rise of the Food Network and other shows revolved around baking and cake products becoming more accessible to consumers, it has given society the chance to experience cake decorating that used to be reserved for elite bakers. I started designing a very different kit at first, more with sculpted cakes in mind, but then I realized what made my cakes different than others was the realism. My ability to teach to all levels and to make my students feel successful at what they learned was the foundation for me designing a kit that was fun to do, delicious to taste, and achievable by all.

**ACD: How did the COVID-19 pandemic help or hurt your new business venture?**

**ES:** It did both. It helped because there was definitely a move to do

more DIY projects at home, which also led to people baking more. It also gave people more time since they no longer had to commute to work or tons of social plans. I found most people and families were looking for activities they could do together. The only way the business was hurt was with factory slowdowns and late shipments. It was very stressful because I launched my first kit for Valentine's Day, and I had promised to deliver it, at the latest, the day before Valentine's Day. Shipping delays were really stressful, but when talking with my other friends who run small businesses, they were all experiencing the same thing.

**ACD: What's next for you, post-pandemic?**

**ES:** More kits! I hope with each kit I produce the learning curve will get less and the sourcing of products and ingredients will become easier. I look forward to getting back to teaching both in culinary schools and private lessons in my studio. **ACD**

