

# Baker rises to national level

► Ulm woman takes grand prize in Bake for the Cure; heading to Pillsbury Bake-off

Story and photos  
by SYDNE GEORGE  
For the Tribune

Ulm home baker Aimee Hachigian-Gould assumed she was on the wrong end of a prank call when she learned she was the \$1,000 national grand prize winner in the Fleischmann's Bake for the Cure contest. That was until she realized the person on the line was Beth Betcher, the Fleischmann's Yeast representative she had spoken with on past occasions when she had won baking contests at the Montana State Fair.

The judges absolutely loved Hachigian-Gould's winning recipe for Strawberries and Cream Coffeecake, Betcher said.

"The flavor was a delightful blend of sweet cake with a rich, fruit filling and the texture was a divine soft crumb cake due to the use of cake flour," the judges said.

"The presentation was beautiful with the crumb topping and the optional use of a heart-shaped pan."

Hachigian-Gould said when she developed the recipe she wanted to create an elegant and pretty, but easy, yeast-risen coffeecake that could be made on short notice.

"It had to be pink, of course, because it was for the breast cancer awareness theme," she said.

Creating winning recipes is nothing new for Hachigian-Gould.



When she competes in the Pillsbury Bake-off next month, Aimee Hachigian-Gould will bake her Cheddar Ranch Puffs. She wowed the judges of Fleischmann's Bake for the Cure with Strawberries and Cream Coffee Cake, below.

Actually, she's been entering and winning baking and cooking contests for years. Her first contest was the Michigan State Fair in 1982, and the following year she won a blue ribbon there for Ghurabia, an Armenian butter

cookie that melts in your mouth.

Since then she has won numerous cooking contests at the Montana State Fair, including the SACO and E. Guittard Chocolate Cake Contests, Spam Cook-off, Wheat and Barley Thon, Crisco Pie Contest, SACO Soup Contest and the C & H Sugar Fudge Contest.

Hachigian-Gould said she's always loved to be in the kitchen, cooking and baking.

"My earliest memories of home seem to revolve around the kitchen," Hachigian-Gould said, adding that she thinks that's because she is 100 percent Armenian and "we're always feeding people."

She learned to cook from her mother and grandmothers and said that cooking is always a family affair with Armenians. And by family she means the whole family.

She remembers starting weeks

See BAKER, 5L



## Wine love now imbibing on a budget

By ELAINE WA  
McClatchy News

The economic troubles of the past year had many consumers looking to escape with a glass of wine. Many wanted to imbibe on a budget.

Wine makers and importers were ordered recently for the Southern Wine & Food Festival said that the volume of bottles sold was relatively constant in 2009, but the price per bottle declined.

"It's the mix that has changed," said Mel Dick, president of the Southern Wine & Food Festival and the festival's sponsor. "People are trading down at all levels, looking for comfort zone. There was a shift at the lower prices and a decrease for the higher-price wines."

In 2009, sales of wine in the \$5 and above category dropped 30 percent wide, according to Nielsen. In 2008, when overall wine sales increased, shipments fell for the first time in years.

Dick and others agree that the strongest demand is for wines at \$10 or less per bottle.

That was a boon for brands like Gnarly Head, which saw business jump 30 percent in 2009, said Jeffrey Lubin, brand manager. Gnarly Head is best known for its Old Vine Zin, which sells for about \$10 a bottle at retail.

"The brand was growing already, but the economy really helped ignite it," Lubin said. "It's got a flavor profile that is designed for the masses. It's very easy drinking."

To appeal to that budget-conscious consumer, many wineries that importer Fred Wildman and Sons is showcasing at the festival are less than \$10. The festival includes wines from France and Italy.

"Before consumer money on expensive wine they loved it now that's not the occasion," said Odessa Wildman, assistant vice president of Wildman and Sons.

"We figure today that consumers are exploring something on a daily basis."

The good news for the wine industry professionals is that consumers are more confident about wine and are willing to fork over