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A PIECE OF 'CAKE'

LIFE ISN'T ALWAYS SWEET AT THE BAKERY

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LINDA STASI

TV Critic

Rating: ★★☆☆

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'CAKE Boss,' TLC's quiet hit (well, quiet compared to the Octo parents), is another show also based on a big family. And big cakes.



SWEET TOOTH: Buddy Valastro, the head of a family bakery business in Hoboken, stars in a new reality series, "Cake Boss."

Because it seemed to be one of those "Let's-Go-To-Work-With . . ." shows, I confess to skipping the advance review copies when they came in. And I was wrong.

The show, which is quickly becoming a viewer favorite for TLC, takes place at Carlo's Bake Shop in Hoboken, NJ.

Carlo, who is long gone, opened the shop 100 years ago -- but his descendents in the Valastro family have been running it ever since.

Now headed by Buddy Valastro, the bake shop is kind of like the Rao's of bakeries -- in the sense that a real family, not some mindless corporation, is in charge and, despite an international reputation, the place still feels homey and good.

The show is mostly in the back of the store with the bakers, helpers and assorted others who work at Carlo's, and it is actually quite fascinating.

Not only do we get to see the day-to-day drama of the business, but we also learn how high-end baking is done as Buddy and his staff create art out of flour and sugar. (There are occasional pop-ups that explain things we might not otherwise understand how to do simply by watching.)

On the latest episode, a couple comes to Buddy for a great old-fashioned Italian wedding cake. But, because they are getting married on the groom's parents' 50th wedding anniversary, they ask if he can make a dove to place on the side (a tradition on Italian wedding cakes) like his parents had on theirs.


Buddy goes one better and figures out how to incorporate a Lucite cage with two live doves into the cake, which are then let go at the ceremony. (Don't worry, they have long ribbons tied to them and are then returned to the pet shop.)




Getting doves in Hoboken isn't as easy as it seems. In fact, it becomes a bit of a problem and two of the bakers first try to catch pigeons (doh!) in the park.




But Buddy isn't limited to family cakes. He also gets an order in another episode for a giant mammal dinosaur cake for the Museum of Natural History (hint: the belly is made of Rice Crispy Treats). Then, there's a complicated Sweet 16 cake that is about seven layers that falls down the stairs and becomes 47,000,000 Sweet 16 pieces.


If I didn't know better, I'd have sworn that the Valastros were family on my mother's side. Love them!

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