

Jandri Van Zyl on building a Cape Town cake empire

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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Jandri Van Zyl's sweet dreams of building a crowd-pleasing cake-haven have steadily been realised since her business The Velvet Cake Co. launched in 2012 to public acclaim.



Fast forward to present day and Van Zyl is readying to open the doors to her fourth store in Cape Town, located in Tyger Valley Centre, which follows shortly after the introduction of the Canal Walk branch earlier this month.

These new additions – which complement the company's thriving online business – provide the ultimate "cake-on-the-go" experience, catering to the busy mall environment where customers can pop in, grab treats, and satiate their sweet tooth while they shop.



A glance at The Velvet Cake Co.'s whimsical offerings is all that's needed to understand how it's built up a loyal fan base in a relatively short space of time. From classic cake iterations that we all know and love, to naked cakes, colourful drip cakes and even a milkshake-cupcake hybrid, the company's creations are instant palate pleasers and mood boosters.

It's been important for Van Zyl that her baked goods exude a Candyland-like character, a theme that evidently extends to the ambiance within her stores. With its lighthearted approach to baking and retailing, The Velvet Cake Co. is becoming one of Cape Town's most recognised and celebrated cake brands.

In the spirit of [Women's Month](#), the accomplished patisserie chef, baker and business owner shares her growth journey with *Bizcommunity*.



Jandri Van Zyl

Where did your love for baking begin and what inspired you to start your own business?

After studying to become a patisserie chef in 2009, I worked very hard to pursue my dream to create my own cake-haven. After chopping and changing between a few creative things like photography and fashion, I decided to pursue what came easily and naturally to me – baking.

With my grandmother being a master baker and being given my very first cookbook at the age of 10, I realised that baking is definitely in my blood.

Could you describe a typical day in your job?

I spend most of my days driving between our three, and soon to be four locations, running the day to day business operations and interacting with my staff members and customers. Being the CEO of this crazy and fun cake emporium, no day is ever the same!

Can you share a bit about The Velvet Cake Co.'s humble beginnings and how it's grown since?

What started off in 2010 as a charming patisserie known as Treat, in the Northern Suburbs, and quickly evolved into The Velvet Cake Co. a mere two years later. The Velvet Cake Co. prides itself in only using the finest ingredients and creating a fun experience that overwhelms customers with joy.

The idea was to create a kind of 'Candyland' or *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* feeling, but with cake. I also wanted to create a large variety of cakes so that everyone can enjoy their favourite slice of cake – from cheesecake to chocolate

cake.



This spring 2018, we are opening not one, but two new stores allowing more cake lovers across the Western Cape to enjoy their fix of the freshest and finest ingredients.

In addition to the Loop Street and Bella Rosa stores, we opened our doors in Canal Walk Shopping Centre on 1 August and will be opening in Tyger Valley Centre on 1 September 2018 as the “ultimate cake-on-the-go” experience, catering to the busy mall environment where customers can pop in, grab treats, and indulge while they shop.

■ ***Congrats on your new Canal Walk store. Since you trade both online and in physical stores, which is no easy feat, what would you say are the opportunities and challenges of doing both?***

Thank you! Our store in Canal Walk has been doing incredibly well, which has been amazing. With the new store at Canal Walk and soon, Tyger Valley, we are able to cater to a slightly different market by providing a more convenient ‘grab-and-go’ experience for shoppers cruising the mall.



■ **What does Women's Month mean to you?**

Women's Month to me means continuing to empower the women in our country and celebrating our strengths and achievements.

At The Velvet Cake Co. we employ mostly women, and it is still one of the proudest aspects of my job that I have been able to watch most of these ladies, who started with very little to no baking experience and have grown to be accomplished bakers and decorators.



Far beyond the vanilla veil at the Velvet Cake Co

Leigh Andrews 24 Aug 2017



■ **Are there any women in your field you have a particular admiration for?**

There are actually a few: gourmet and food writer Nigella Lawson; Australian food stylist, author and magazine editor, Donna Hay; pastry chef and judge, Candace Nelson; and Australian baker Katherine Sabbath.



■ **What advice do you have for other budding female entrepreneurs?**

Surround yourself with a supportive team – the faster you learn to delegate, the better. And always remember to take things one day at a time, and let them grow naturally.

■ **Looking ahead, what is your ultimate vision for The Velvet Cake Co?**

Creating a household brand that customers love and trust.

Hungry for more? Visit [The Velvet Cake Co.](#) to order online or pop into its stores in Bella Rosa, Loop Street, Canal Walk and soon-to-be Tyger Valley. Connect with the brand on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Pinterest](#) and [Twitter](#).

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