



CAKES THAT DAZZLE

World Equestrian Center's Executive Pastry Chef brings a touch of France and a lot of creativity.

Yohann Le Bascond was born in France and moved to the U.S. at 20 after completing French pastry chef training, including everything from chocolate and croissants, to tarts and croquembouche. "I moved to Miami, which was great," says Yohann. "You can imagine that to me, it was a bit of a culture shock. But that's where I started experiencing American cuisine. I was working at a French company at the time. Fast forward to 2020, I got my green card to be able to find a job in the U.S. but three months later the pandemic started and no one was hiring. Thankfully, the World Equestrian Center (WEC) was looking for an executive pastry chef. I was employee #1, hired about seven months prior to the opening of WEC Ocala. I've been there four years now, and I honestly can't tell you how incredible it's been."

Though Yohann doesn't have equestrian experience, he learns on the job. "I'm learning about horses every single day, what different disciplines people do, from Western pleasure, Paso Finos, polo, and so on. I know who wakes up early, who shows late, and what people do depending on which activities they do," he says.

Couples who marry at the World Equestrian Center go through the process by choosing their venue and menu, signing contracts, and working together with the team to manage all the details. When discussing the cake, Yohann meets with couples to help them choose a flavor combination. "They usually can take up to three different flavors of cake, as well as three different fillings based on the menu that we offer. We do a mix and match, where they can have little individual servings of cake and fillings. They have a special VIP experience at the tasting. We pay a

lot of attention to detail in a private dining room at the restaurant. We make it a big deal because it is a big deal! We want them to feel taken care of," says Yohann.

"Because at that point, they've usually spent about 90 minutes talking about and trying food, it usually makes sense to take a pause and come back later to talk about the design of the cake. I don't want to miss details. So, in the second session, we discuss the cake's design.

Brides nowadays usually spend a lot of time on Pinterest, Facebook, and Instagram coming up with ideas. I don't want just to copy and paste a cake they find, I want theirs to be unique, so I normally encourage them to find about three to five photos they like, and we can put them together to

create their unique cake," he continues.

Though many brides choose a traditional, white wedding cake, many others give Yohann a lot of freedom to build a cake he thinks will be one-of-a-kind, unforgettable, and fun. "One of my favorites was a cake where it was a seven-tiered cake, but three of the tiers were clear acrylic. So even though it was really only four layers of cake, it was five or six feet tall, and just really beautiful and unique," remembers Yohann. "I'm always here to satisfy the bride and groom and make sure that whatever they want is what we deliver. It requires a lot of imagination and some technical skills and building skills; it's really a lot of fun."

Often, the venue influences the choice of design. The center's Paris room,

which is dark colored with gold accents, leads many couples to choose gold highlights in their cake. Yohann also emphasizes the importance of the room's size when considering the cake. "If you have a three-tiered cake by the Grand Arena on the Terrace, the cake will get lost. What we can do, if your cake is going to be for fifty people, for example, that would be a standard two-tier cake. But who wants a two-tier cake? We offer styrofoam, so the first three tiers of your cake could be a dummy cake, and the top two or three could be real. No one will be able to tell the difference, and it's going to change the whole game. If you're only planning to do this once, then you should do it right. Go big! Make it count, and don't be scared to be a little adventurous." 📸

