

## The windowshopper



RENEE ALLEN, owner of Carrot Top Pastries, frosts one of her delicious creations. Her carrot cakes are made from fresh, wholesome ingredients. The shop is open for limited hours to retail customers.

## Carrot Top Pastries sells something from the oven

By FRANCINE SILVEJMAN

Two years ago, Renee Allen was in a bad car accident. At the time, she was a pre-med student and supporting herself and daughter, Tonyka, by laboring long into the night producing cakes and pies for prison inmates and theater groups. Today, Renee is the proud owner of Carrot Top Pastries at 214 St. and Broadway, happily turning out carrot cakes by the dozens.

Forced to quit school after the accident, Renee's friends recognized her baking talents and persuaded her to open a bakery. Medical jargon still dancing in her head, Renee at first resisted. "I felt insulted but eventually realized it wasn't such a bad idea."

Drawn in off the street by the delicious baking aromas emanating from the shop, patrons are warmly greeted at the door by Renee, a vivacious, smiling, young woman. Her specialty, carrot cake, is made with shredded carrots and chopped walnuts and glazed with a cream cheese frosting. Each week, she adds a new treat, such as chocolate chip or oatmeal raisin cookies, depending on her mood.

Renee prides herself on the freshness and homemade quality of her products. The carrots are grated daily. In all, she uses twelve ingredients, none of which are artificial. "I am even still

using fresh vanilla" boasts Renee, "while others switched to the cheaper artificial kind when the vanilla bean crop failed last year."

Until a few weeks ago, Renee was only selling wholesale to about ten midtown restaurants. However, after an appearance July 31 on Channel 7 with Anna Bond, her Inwood neighbors insisted she open up to the retail trade. The shop is now open Tuesday and Thursday to walk-in customers and she and her husband, Robert, do all the wholesale deliveries. They will deliver to retail customers if the size of the order makes it worthwhile.

Renee bakes for all occasions—weddings, baptisms and parties in general. Reports constantly come back to her about the success of her cakes: "I now tell all my customers to take off a slice for themselves before serving to their guests because, before they turn around, the cake is gone. That's what happened to Anna Bond, when she brought the cake back to the studio!"

Prices range from \$2 for a 9 ounce loaf (restaurants charge \$2 a slice) to \$150 for a three-tier wedding cake. Cookies are 40 cents apiece. The cakes can be frozen for up to seven months. Carrot Top Pastries, 5023 Broadway, is open to the general public Tuesday and Thursday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. The shop can be reached by calling 562-1332 or 562-1082.