

color me sweet

Two K.C. moms draw from art and design to make vibrant desserts

by contributing writer Tiffany Killoren



Spend just a few minutes on the Ampersand Design Studio website (ampersanddesignstudio.com) and you'll emerge inspired to add more color to your life. The company, cleverly named after the "&" symbol that represents cohesion and a collection of thoughts and ideas, is the result of Carrie Kiefer and Morgan Georgie's gift for graphic design and ambition to take their vibrant and modern aesthetic to the next level. It is clear upon meeting them that their expression is not limited to professional endeavors. It is their mantra for how best to approach life with two young children—balancing careers and family, and turning otherwise ordinary challenges into colorful creations.

Kiefer and Georgie are best friends, business partners and mom-to-mom confidantes. After perfecting their professional brand identity through graphic design work for a variety of impressive clients, they decided to expand their customer base and product availability. They now offer a collection of funky melamine platters, art prints and wall décor for sale on etsy.com/shop/shopampersand, with

From left: Morgan Georgie and Carrie Kiefer.



future plans to sell products on their website and also expand their brand to include expressive household fabrics.

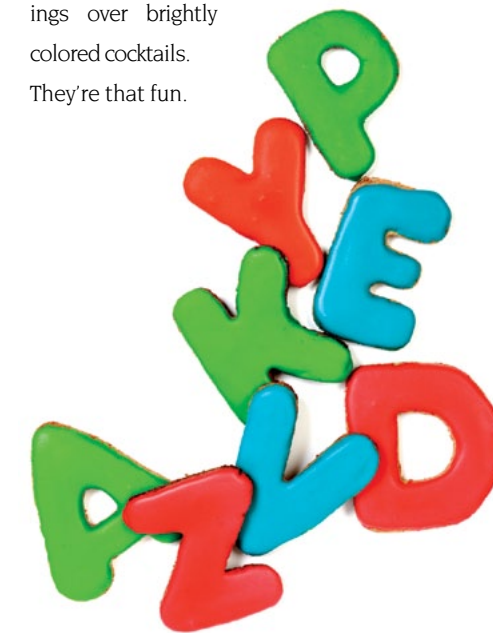
Such creative use of pattern and color has become the fingerprint of the Ampersand Design Studio, and it is also the inspiration behind a few of their ideas that you can really sink your teeth into.

Drawing inspiration from crisp, bold color blocking, graphic prints, and a contrast of hard and soft textures, Kiefer and Georgie created two desserts that could convince any child to clean their plate of Brussels sprouts. Most importantly, both of these delectable delights can be made with the help of eager little hands and a panel of voluntary taste-testers with a sweet tooth.

The first dessert turns a traditional dish on its head (and up a few notches). By alternating layers of multi-color Jell-O with Cool Whip (yogurt can be used for a healthier version) in simple drinking or wine glasses, they produced a vision reminiscent of striped ribbon candy from a 1950s drugstore. Top it with sprinkles or your favorite candy, and the confection almost becomes too pretty to eat. Almost.

For their second creation they reinvented the good ol' ABCs by transforming a sugar cookie alphabet into a bold, graphic statement, with bright royal icing.

The duo's energy is contagious. It makes you want to give them *carte blanche* to design something—anything—for you. At a minimum, you'll want to discuss their artistic musings over brightly colored cocktails. They're that fun.



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the recipes

They also attribute much of their inspiration to the bundles of love in their lives. Kiefer, who is mom to 1-year-old Emmett, finds artistic inspiration by seeing the world through his eyes. "I am also seeing things as *he* discovers them," she says. With an 18-month-old little boy of her own to keep up with, Georgie agrees that life with her little Shaw has made her observe things in a different light. "I'm always discovering details that I ordinarily wouldn't see all the time because of Shaw," she says.

According to the Ampersand designers, the choice is yours: You can either live a life in shades of gray or you can live in a wonderful world of color. With their whimsical desserts, Kiefer and Georgie prove that a palette with the right artistic ingredients can delight a palate of an entirely different (and sweet) kind. *

Striped Jell-O Parfait

Makes six 8-ounce parfaits

What you need

- 1 small box of orange Jell-O
- 1 small box of blueberry Jell-O
- 1 small box of pineapple Jell-O
- 1 large tub of Cool Whip or yogurt
- 1 small box of lime Jell-O
- Note: Mix blueberry and lime for turquoise color

What to do

Prepare turquoise (or whatever color you want on the bottom) Jell-O as directed, using the "quick chill" method, meaning adding some ice.

Pour first layer of Jell-O into glasses, reserving about 1/3 of the liquid Jell-O. Put glasses in the refrigerator and chill for 30 minutes to an hour, or until set.

Mix about 1/3 cup of Cool Whip into the remaining turquoise Jell-O. Pour the Jell-O/Cool Whip mixture on top of the set turquoise Jell-O already in the glasses. Repeat process for each color.



Whole Wheat Vanilla Sugar Cookies

What you need

- 3/4 cup turbinado sugar
- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup coconut oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1-1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 tablespoon milk

What to do

Cream the sugar, butter and coconut oil until fluffy. Add the egg, milk and vanilla and beat well.

In a small mixing bowl, combine the flour, baking powder and salt. Add to the butter mixture, and mix on medium speed until thoroughly combined.

Turn the dough onto a large piece of plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least two hours or overnight.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Flour the work surface and rolling pin. Remove half the chilled dough from the plastic; rewrap and refrigerate the remaining half. If the dough was refrigerated overnight, let sit on counter for about 30 minutes or until pliable.

Roll dough to a thickness of 1/4- to 3/8-inch and cut into shapes. Transfer cutouts to an ungreased baking sheet, keeping them at least 1-1/2 inches apart. Form the scraps into a ball

and chill. Roll and cut remaining dough.

Bake 8-10 minutes or just until edges start to brown slightly. Cool on baking sheet for 3 minutes and transfer with a spatula to cooling racks.

*Makes approximately 2 dozen 3-inch cookies or 16 oversized cookies. Recipe can easily be doubled.



Royal Icing

- 3-3/4 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon extract
- 3 large egg whites
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar

What to do

Combine all ingredients in mixer and beat 6 minutes until well combined. Color as desired with food coloring. Dip top of each cooled cookie in frosting. Let dry on rack to a hard, shiny finish.

Cookie and icing recipes adapted from *Sugarbaker's Cookie Cutter Cookbook* by Diana Collingwood Butts and Carol V. Wright. (Simon & Schuster, 1997)



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