



## The Journal

2023 Year of the PET



Top 10 happy pet stories  
Read below



# San Francisco bakery that makes dog cakes seemed ridiculous. Then it melted my heart.

Januray 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 BY Alix Martichoux. When I heard there was a new bakery in San Francisco that specialized in \$65 Instagrammable organic birthday cakes for dogs, I thought there couldn't be anything more stereotypical San Franciscan. (Short of paying in cryptocurrency or something like that.)

I was fully prepared to hate on Mishka Cakes and everything it represented. It seemed like a combination of two food trends that annoy me: expensive pastries and things that are crafted with Instagram front of mind. But when I looked them up, I saw the business had a perfect score on Yelp: Of the 53 reviews, all but two were a perfect five stars. If these cakes could win over the notoriously picky Yelp crowd, maybe there was something special happening here.

I visited the store in Presidio Heights (a neighborhood with the perfect demographic for a dog bakery, if you ask me) along with our photographer, a fellow editor and her dog, Archer typically a finicky eater but ready for his first journalistic assignment.

We were warmly greeted by owner Olia Rosenblatt, who could not have been more excited to see us. "I'm so nervous," she kept



High end Oscartek's Italia model display cases

apologizing as she beckoned us further into the store. Meeting Archer seemed to put her at ease — she showered him with compliments as she snuck him treats. “Oh my god, he’s so luscious. Just amazing.”

Upon seeing the cakes in the refrigerated case, I was struck by how they looked too beautiful to eat – for people and dogs alike. There were small beet-red domes topped with flecks of gold leaf next to others molded into the shape of green and orange bubbles. The uninitiated may mistake these for a 1970s-era Jello-O dessert filled with buttercream and fruit instead of turkey beef, lamb or chicken. The largest was a rainbow cake filled with 3 pounds of meat — definitely meant to share among more than one dog friend.



It’s not just the cakes that are designed for Instagram. The furniture is mid-century modern there’s a fluffy shag rug (bold choice for a business that caters to dogs), and there’s a photo backdrop with lights where dogs can pose as they resist the urge inhale the meaty cake sitting right in front of them. In the front of the store there are racks of handmade dog clothing, including Italian tweed jackets that retail for more than \$100. Here’s where the cynicism started to creep back into my brain.

As customers came in, Rosenblatt greeted them and the dogs by name. She knelt on the ground to distribute treats among them, making sure the shy dogs got just as much to eat as the more frisky ones. When the dogs were fed, we sat down to talk about the story behind Mishka Cakes, starting with its name.

**“The story of the name of my brand is technically my love story with my husband,”**

Rosenblatt said. She met her husband in the lobby of a San Francisco hotel when she was

visiting from Russia. Stunned by his tall stature and broad shoulders, she told him in broken English, “Oh my god, you look like a bear.” Mishka is “bear” in Russian.

After moving to San Francisco, she started experimenting with aesthetically pleasing dog cakes at home as a passion project (and yes, she taste tested them along with all her friends’ dogs). Rosenblatt may have been a newcomer to the city but she had already adopted one of San Franciscans’ central ethos: organic food.

“All my cakes have no dyes and no preservatives,” she explained. She uses fresh vegetable juice to attain the bright colors seen in her cakes. It’s an extremely delicate process, Rosenblatt explained. Even just a smidge overcooked, and the vegetable juices lose their vibrant color. The cakes are about 70% organic meat, and the rest is vegetables, egg protein and agar to set the jelly. A small cake will cost you \$12-\$17 depending on the type of meat filling, and the big multicolored birthday cake costs \$65. Rosenblatt says it takes at least an hour and a half to make as she waits for each stripe of color to cool and set before adding another layer. They last seven days in the store’s refrigerated case.

“I never save anything. In my freezer, it’s empty there. Every time I make a batch of new cakes I order special vegetables, special meats. It’s my principal position: no dyes, no preservatives. Just fresh things.”

Hearing the work that goes into the cakes made me feel bad for balking at the price tag originally. In a city where there are more dogs

than children, it's not surprising people like to spoil their dogs with nothing but the best. That drive may bring people to Mishka in the first place, but what keeps them coming back is something harder to find in San Francisco: community. Rosenblatt says data from her credit card reader tells her 80% of customers are repeat visitors. Regulars mingle and meet on social media; two have even fallen in love (the dogs' owners, not the dogs). The walls are decorated with photos of customers' dogs, each posing with a Mishka cake. She rents out the space for private dog birthday parties, too.

"This is such a nice, wonderful place to connect with friends," customer Paige Mantel told us at the store. Her dog Samson also keeps her coming back. "If he sees us walking or driving anywhere near here, he starts crying and pulling because he knows where he's going."

Even Archer, a usually picky eater who I outsourced the taste testing for this story to, couldn't get enough of the chicken soufflé cake we bought him (once we cut it into prim and proper bite-sized pieces).

I did not plan for this to be a fluffy story (pun intended, thank you very much) about a seemingly silly San Francisco business. But here we are. I don't even have a dog and the hour I spent in Mishka was enough to make me want to go back. It felt so pure to witness someone really chasing their passion, even if that passion is gourmet cakes for spoiled San Francisco dogs.

"This means the world to me. Even as I talk about it I have goosebumps all over my body. This is what I live for. Right now I'm the happiest person in the world. I love my clients, I love to see them come back and their dogs lick my face. ... It's the best."

Mishka is at 3334 Sacramento St. in San Francisco.

Alix Martichoux is an SFGATE digital editor. Read her latest stories and send her news tips at [alix.martichoux@sfgate.com](mailto:alix.martichoux@sfgate.com).  
SFGATEAUNINDITA BHATIA and RENEE COSME,

---

## **Top 10 happy pet stories: Here are this year's best 10 happy pet stories, including some about Hurricane Harvey rescue dogs and puppies and one about a cat getting adopted.**

By KELLI HARMON

December 19, 2023

We share a lot of stories about the animals at Best Friends (as well as those with our partners) because each pet is special and has a unique story. Out of the hundreds of stories shared on our website and on social media in the past year, we've collected those that were the most popular, most shared and most liked.

If you missed these stories about dogs (and one cat) the first time around, you can catch them now. And if you liked them the first time, you can relive the happiness all over again.

## Top 10 most popular stories from the past year

### 1. A dog named Boy

A Texas family's tragic year turns hopeful knowing that their dog is safe after Hurricane Harvey.

Boy is more than a pet to his family. When Hurricane Harvey separated the sweet brown-and-white pit bull terrier from the Bonillas, it was devastating on a deeper level than just missing their dog.



### 2. Priceless Picasso

Best Friends Network partner spotlight: Why everyone is falling in love with two dogs saved by Lovable Dog Rescue. Picasso and Pablo the dogs are brothers and one has a smile like no other



Not long ago, Picasso and Pablo were on a shelter's kill list. The two dogs are brothers and one has a smile like no other. But a network partner organization took them in and changed their lives forever.

### 3. Wags to riches

Patrick Stewart fosters a pit bull for Wags and Walks, and it's utterly adorable.

Patrick Stewart fosters a pit bull terrier named Ginger for Wags and Walks

Actor Patrick Stewart has a new leading lady and the couple's love story is burning up the screen. Read the story



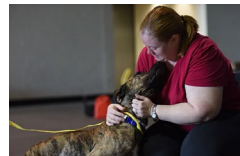
### 4. Dog and her puppies safe after Hurricane Harvey

A mother and her litter of puppies find shelter.



Wonderful mama dog Sweet Abilene is doing a great job caring for her babies

Received with warm, loving arms, this wonderful mama is doing a great job caring for her babies, and finally is getting some much-needed rest.



### 5. Dog reunited with family after hurricane

Marmaduke got out of his yard just as the flooding hit.

Diana Brown and her family have lost a lot in the past two weeks, but got their dog Marmaduke back but not their goofy, gangly brindle pup.



### 6. Hurricane Harvey brings together heroes for pets

Men and women in uniform volunteer to help pets after Hurricane Harvey in Houston

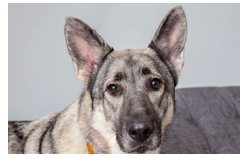
"What's been fantastic about the men and women in uniform is that they're ready and willing to do whatever is needed. And they're often coming off long shifts at difficult jobs, but they're happy to go an hour longer for the animals."

### 7. Senior German shepherd receives the gift of a new home

After ending up in a Los Angeles shelter, Sienna faces fears and gets a great new family.

Senior German shepherd dog Sienna overcame her fears and landed the perfect family

From frightened and fearful to safe and secure in a forever home, senior dog Sienna overcame her fears and landed the perfect family, with help from her caregivers at Best Friends in Los Angeles.



### 8. Homer's odyssey

One of the Sanctuary's longest residing cats finally gets a home.

After nearly two decades of waiting, Homer the cat has finally been adopted, a cat at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary has finally found a home.



### 9. Love letter to a dog

She was once unwanted and then faced challenges finding the right home. But now the dog named Mrs. Mary Todd Lincoln is loved beyond belief.

Mrs. Mary Todd Lincoln the dog's adoption story from Best Friends in New York is pure happiness that makes you want to keep striving to Save Them All.

This sweet dog, adopted from Best Friends in New York, is loved beyond belief. Read the story



### 10. Two older dogs, one perfect home

Adopting two senior shih tzus is the best decision these New Yorkers have ever made.

"We are absolutely not getting a dog today," said David Johnston to Danny Costa. David must have really meant what he said, because they didn't adopt a dog that day. They adopted two. Keep the good news coming all year long by joining Best Friends



*Photos by Erica Danger, Molly Wald, Lori Fusaro, Stacey Axelrod, Best Friends staff and courtesy of Lovable Dog Rescue, Wags and Walks, and Luke Hogan*



512 South Airport Blvd., South San Francisco, CA 94080

Tel: 855.885.2400 | 650.342.2400 | Fax: 650.342.7400 | [www.oscartek.com](http://www.oscartek.com)