How It All Began

We wanted to preface *The Pastry Chef's Companion* with a poignant and clever quote from a well-respected culinarian, but after exhaustive research we came back to something one of our less than enthusiastic pastry students once said at the culinary school where we met as instructors in 2001. He had what we refer to as "pastry phobia." He detested the balance beam scale and cringed at the sight of a cake recipe. During midterm review he was asked how he liked the pastry class, and without skipping a beat he replied, "You see, I'm a devout southern Baptist, and all of my life I've been taught that hell is fire and brimstone and eternal damnation, but now I know that hell is really sugar and flour and yeast and butter and eggs!" We are sure that at one time or another every culinarian has shared this spiritual assessment, but the passion for our craft always prevails. Like the bits of shaved chocolate that lodge under your fingernails, it is part of you; once ingrained, there is no escaping its sweet and satisfying grip.

The Pastry Chef's Companion was conceived one night over dinner as we were talking about how great it would be to have a reference book that included all sorts of information about pastries, breads, desserts, and confections. As we stared across the table from each other, a collective light went on and this book was born. We naively thought, "How hard can it be? Just gather up some words, define them, alphabetize them, and voilà!—we have a book." Despite our working full time, having a child, and going to school, two years seemed like a reasonable time to accomplish it all. Needless to say, we were in for the biggest shock of our lives. But 4,800 definitions, 10 appendices, 2 master's degrees, and 3,600 diapers later, we made it.

This book is designed to offer a comprehensive assortment of well-defined pastry, baking, and confectionery arts terms and products, including interesting information about the origin, history, and folklore of the items. *The Pastry Chef's Companion* is part dictionary, part encyclopedia.

The vast amount of information contained in this book provides readers with a thorough reference to the components that make up the baking, pastry, and confectionery arts. Whether you are a chef, pastry chef, culinary student, or devoted foodie, this book will broaden your knowledge and enhance your gastronomic library. In addition, we have included pronunciations for as many terms as possible; for ease of use, the pronunciations are given in simple syllable sounds rather than phonetic symbols.

In an effort to reconcile the conflicting demands of teaching, researching a book, raising a child, and earning our master's degrees, we brainstormed new and innovative ways of educating our students that also yielded some of the results you read in this book. The lecture portions of our classes were four hours long, and no matter how entertaining a teacher is, there is only so much you can say about making a pie. To make the lessons more interesting and interactive, we began assigning research homework. Each student was given a specific dessert or pastry to research and asked to prepare a presentation for the class. Though it was a challenge for the students to uncover quality facts, many came through with fascinating, educational reports that we were able to include here. Although there are many books on the subjects of baking, pastry, and the confectionery arts, there has been no single, comprehensive resource devoted to the topic. It is our hope that *The Pastry Chef's Companion* will be that resource.

We trust chefs, pastry chefs, bakers, confectionery artists, and pastry enthusiasts will relish the wealth of information here, and that it will satisfy their sweet tooth for knowledge.

From us to you—read, learn, and enjoy.

The Rinskys