



good works

by Stephanie Emma Pfeffer

EVERYDAY WAYS WE CAN
ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Name: Sharmila Melwani

Age: 42

Cause: Childhood hunger

City: Fort Lauderdale, FL

Family: Husband Vijay; kids Liana, 5,
and Viraj, 3



To learn more about the Great American Bake Sale—and order a free starter kit—go to greatamericanbakesale.org.

“It’s heartbreaking to see children starving. No matter where I travel—from here to India—there’s just no excuse for kids to go hungry.”

attention of a food writer from the *Miami Herald* who happened to be interviewing Renu for an Indian cookbook. “The writer thought the cookies were good enough to sell, so I decided to take my hobby to the next level,” says Sharmila. Soon after, her company, Cookies by Shar, was written up in the paper.

Learning of a need In 2007 Sharmila went to a food festival and saw someone wearing a Great American Bake Sale (GABS) shirt. She was intrigued, figuring anything that involved baking had to be fun. Then she learned that GABS raises money to fight childhood hunger. “I never realized it was such an epidemic,” she says. “I vowed to do something.” She contacted her local chapter of Share Our Strength (SOS), the umbrella organization

that runs GABS, and asked how she could contribute. **Cookies for a cause** That April she participated in her first GABS—alongside 21 other vendors—at a North Miami mall. “I baked 300 to 400 cookies,” she says. More than 3,000 people came, and the sale raised a total of \$7,000 in three hours. **Donating her dough** Sharmila was hooked and business was booming. She decided to donate 5% of all cookie sales to SOS.

A true treat In 2008 Sharmila brought Liana to volunteer with her at GABS. Ever since, Liana has been asking when they’re going to go back and help the children. “It’s an important value to teach the little ones,” Sharmila says. “You don’t realize how lucky you are until your luck runs out.” ●

Recipe for Success

Sharmila’s ingredient list includes one part sugar and a heaping tablespoon of goodwill. Stir well, and help beat childhood hunger.

Crumb of an idea With a degree in finance, Sharmila Melwani never expected she’d be baking cookies for a living. But a few years ago, frustrated by the lack of party-favor options for her daughter Liana’s birthday, she called the owner of a local dessert shop and asked for a basic sugar cookie recipe. “At the time I had no intention of

starting a business,” she says. “I was in that new-mom mentality, only interested in homemaking.”

Recipe research A month later her husband, Vijay, bought her a standing mixer for her birthday. She began experimenting and wondered if she could make the original cookie dough taste even better. “Some days the kitchen looked like it

had been hit by a flour tornado,” she says. But with the help of two girlfriends as taste-testers, she finally perfected the recipe. **How sweet it is** By Halloween she was churning out cookies shaped like pumpkins and bats to give to trick-or-treaters and family and friends. It was a batch given to her mom, Renu Chatani, that caught the

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