



Jackie Kai Ellis creates tasty treats such as cardamom kouign-amanns (top L), croissants (bottom L) and lattes (top R) at Beaucoup Bakery (bottom R)



# A Sweet Story

Jackie Kai Ellis dishes on starting over, her favourite local spots and the business of baking

**BY JILL VON SPRECKEN + PHOTOS BY KK LAW**

Biting into a perfectly crisp, flaky pastry can certainly feel like a life-changing experience, but in the case of Jackie Kai Ellis, that indulgence actually helped the *Beaucoup Bakery* (page 70) owner whip up a new life. When Ellis flew to Paris to study pastry making at *École Gastronomique Bellouet Conseil*, she left behind her life as a graphic designer with her own firm. The catalyst? A cookie.

Years before, in an attempt to find a bright spot during her struggle with depression, Ellis focused on something positive each day. “And it would be, this afternoon I’m going to eat a chocolate chip cookie,” she explains. “I’d hold it in my mind all day long. Then eating chocolate chip cookies turned into baking them.”

Eventually, she was baking so much—“I was giving away like three layer cakes a week,” she says—that she began to sell her sugary wares at the local farmers’ market. “I basically ran my design firm during the day and baked all night. I loved it,” says Ellis. “Eventually I just thought to myself, why am I living this life? So I thought, I’m going to go and take a sabbatical for a year, and do something that just makes me happy.”

In 2012, to the delight of Vancouverites and visitors alike, she returned from Paris to open her charming patisserie. The menu of impossibly irresistible

treats includes her buttery, flaky croissants, often cited as Vancouver’s best.

Besides running a successful bakery, Ellis also makes a pastry pilgrimage several times a year to host *The Paris Tours*. When she conceived the idea, she thought, “I come to Paris a few times a year just to eat. How amazing would it be if I could have people come with me and we could all experience this together?”

So, when Ellis is in Vancouver, what places top her list? The seasonal menu at *Cinara* (page 71) is her choice for out-of-town guests. For sushi, she favours the omakase at *Yuji’s* (page 73). When she craves a well-crafted cocktail, she heads to *Grapes & Soda* (page 75), where Satoshi Yonemori minds the bar. “He wants to surprise you, and inspire you,” she explains.

Ellis is also known for her fashion sense—another thing she picked up in Paris—and upscale shops *Boboli* (page 20), *Gravity* (page 20) and *Max Mara* (page 20) suit her sartorial style. She also recommends that visitors hike in *Lighthouse Park*, which she says is “one of the most beautiful walks in the forest,” visit *Granville Island*, and get a dose of Zen at her “happy place,” *Willow Stream Spa* (page 26).

To find your own happy place, we recommend Ellis’s life-changing recipe—a cookie. **W**