



University of Missouri

College of Veterinary Medicine

[Applying](#) | [Calendars](#) | [Contact](#) | [News & Events](#)

Search

INFORMATION FOR:

[Admissions Guide](#)[Current Students](#)[Alumni & Friends](#)[Faculty & Staff](#)[Veterinarians](#)[About the College](#)[Departments](#)[Teaching & Research](#)[Giving to Vet Med](#)[Teaching Hospital](#)[Veterinary Medical
Diagnostic
Laboratory \(VMDL\)](#)[CVM Employment](#)[Zalk Veterinary
Medical Library](#)[CVM Course Materials](#)[MyZou](#)[Home](#)

NEWS & EVENTS

Intern's Clever Cupcakes Capture Attention of Homemaking Magnate

As a fourth-year student at the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, Nicole Puza was charged with leading the Class of 2012's morale committee. She had her work cut out for her. As the group immersed itself in the intensive study needed to prepare for the North American Veterinary Licensing Exam, Puza felt a growing need to lift her own, as well as her classmates' spirits.

"Everyone was so stressed," she said, "I wanted to make people smile."

Puza had always possessed a passion for arts and crafts. When she was just 13, she painted a mural on her bedroom wall of angels playing trumpets with a music staff flowing between them. She also enjoyed hobbies like decorating pottery and knitting. However, making woolen scarves for all 84 of her classmates was neither feasible, nor particularly needed in the Florida climate, so she turned her creative energy in a new direction. She found a book on making cupcakes and began baking.

"It's an instant gratification craft," she said. "When I had time and didn't have something I had to do, I would make cupcakes as a de-stressor."

Puza, who is now undertaking a small animal rotating internship at the MU College of Veterinary Medicine, said her first batch of morale-boosting cakes for her classmates was timed to coincide with Thanksgiving last year. In keeping with the holiday, she created turkey shaped treats that were quickly gobbled up.

Her creativity continued whenever she had time to spare. She soon moved beyond the ideas she found in the cupcake book and started drawing on her own imagination for inspiration. Her cupcakes were as much sculpture as indulgence. One time her former classmates were treated to cakes that resembled broken eggs. She designed another batch of cupcakes to look like blood cells on a slide. Classmates were not the only beneficiary of her baking therapy; she also made cupcakes for her "Angry Birds-crazy" nephews. She experimented with various melting chocolates, but wrestled with how to assemble the video game birds' comically oversized heads. Eventually she decided to make heads by lining the inside of plastic Easter eggs with chocolate.



Nicole Puza on the set of The Martha Stewart Show with Martha Stewart. Dr. Puza, an intern at the MU Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital, demonstrated how to make cupcakes that look like cheeseburgers and turn pound cake into French fries.

"A lot of it is trial and error," she said. "I stand in the candy aisle a lot and look at the candy and decide what I can do with it. A lot of candy, like Starbursts and chewy Jolly Ranchers, can be molded, kind of like clay."

A classmate shared photos of Puza's turkey cupcakes with family members, including an uncle who is the chief financial officer of Martha Stewart Living. The creation so impressed him that he asked to see additional photos of Puza's cupcake creations and ultimately invited the Connecticut native to visit the set of The Martha Stewart Show the next time she was in New York City.

Preparing for a trip home last spring, Puza responded to the invitation. She received two tickets via email to the April 10 show. However, less than a week before the show was scheduled to be taped in front of an audience, she received a second email from the show's producers. Stewart had learned that Puza would be in the studio audience and requested that instead the veterinary student appear as a guest and demonstrate how to make one of her cupcake recipes.

In a flurry of emails and telephone calls, Puza provided the program's baking staff with recipes and instructions to make cupcakes, brownies, pound cake and icing, which the bakers completed prior to the taping. During her six-and-a-half-minute segment on the air, Puza showed Stewart how to split the vanilla cupcake to resemble a hamburger bun. The brownie became the patty. Frosting was colored red for ketchup, yellow-orange to resemble American cheese and green to look like lettuce. White sprinkles became "sesame seeds" on the top of the bun. A crinkle knife was employed to fabricate french fries from pound cake. The fries were then toasted to provide the final aesthetic touch.

Puza said she was nervous prior to the taping, but received some sage advice from the producers who told her to relax and enjoy the experience otherwise it would just be a blur in her memory. She said Stewart herself also put her at ease.

"I met Martha in the commercial break before my segment as our make-up was being touched up and our microphones were being put on. She was so poised and calm and genuinely kind. She made me feel very comfortable. She complimented many of my previous cupcake designs and remarked how she had been hoping to meet me for months. All of the staff on the show were so upbeat and welcoming. They all made me feel like I belonged there."

Since her brush with fame, Puza has completed her doctor of veterinary medicine degree and brought her veterinary knowledge and cake decorating talents to the MU Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital. She has already impressed her colleagues here with such offerings as cupcake rubber ducks, sheep and ants at a picnic.

Puza's internship is a year long, after which she hopes to secure a residency in internal medicine. Although the appearance on the Martha Stewart Show gave her reason to briefly consider pursuing her cupcake craft professionally, she said at this stage in her veterinary career, she does not have the time to view it as more than a hobby and a means to relieve stress.

[Return to News and Events home](#)

College of Veterinary Medicine
W-203 Veterinary Medicine Building
Columbia, MO 65211
Phone: (573) 882-3554
E-mail: cvmwebmaster@missouri.edu



©2005 Curators of the University of Missouri
[DMCA](#) and other [copyright information](#).
an [equal opportunity/ADA institution](#)

Last Update: November 5, 2012