Alaska-Bakes.com Leon Mowlds and Ashley Robbins

It’s not just about delivering baked food, it’s delivering love. While preparing a sumptuous meal is a gift for the recipient, giving freshly based cakes and treats is truly a gift of love, especially when accompanied by a personal message.

In this time of COVID it is hard to remain connected with loved ones especially when family members are cocooning or living at a distance. Traditional means of sharing comfort within a household has been to bake and thousands of people up and down the county have taken to baking with gusto. Recipes are shared from everything from spelt bread to cup cakes, from rhubard crumble to lemon drizzle cake. Images are posted online sharing the successes – and failures – of each presentation. And don’t talk about the shortages of flour in the supermarkets.

But what if granny and grandad live more than 5 km away, how can the family share then? Well, Alaska-Bakes is providing just the answer. Set up by Leon Mowlds and Ashely Robbins this tiny bakery is creating some of the most talked about cakes in the county, if not the further afield. The couple decided to go for their dream business in November of last year opening up their bakery on the mainstreet in Rathnew, Co Wicklow. They very quickly developed a following and were about to hit the big time when taking part in the annual East Coast FM Coffee morning. They pledged cakes and bakes in support of the charity and were gutted when the event was cancelled.

In fact, COVID might have stopped them in their tracks only they looked for an alternative way to stay in business and indeed increase their fledging sales. For starters they kept on their pledge to deliver bakes to the different cancer services despite the cancellation of the coffee mornings.

Then they suggested their customers put in special messages with their orders to the recipients. Ashley, the baker and hailing from Alaksa, is behind the scenes creating the tasty treat boxes and cakes.

“We are going to tasty food rather than flashy food,” she explains. “Things like tea bracks and lemon drizzle cake are big favourites.”

Leon is the marketeer and deliverer of the food within 20 kms, after that they use a courier service.

“Two things jump out for me. One is the faces of the people getting the gifts, when they read the cards from their loved one, it can be quite emotional. Sometimes I wish I had a camera to capture such moments.

“Secondly is their amazement at the freshness of the baking – oftentimes it might still be warm from the oven. They love that.”

Both Leon and Ashely are thrilled at the response to their cakes, especially from the locals. Repeat orders are common and they are very grateful to support from people in the area. It means a lot to them.

“Maybe they are ordered because they feel sorry for us,” suggests Leon laughing. I point out that one order maybe a sympathy order, but a second is definitely a vote of confidence in the baking.