



*Cherry displays her most popular item, Granny's Coffee Cake.*

# *Gifts from the Heart*

Sherry Cherry is well-known for her Granny's Coffee Cake. Soft, buttery, swirled with spicy cinnamon and topped with plenty of savory walnuts, this is no ordinary cake — but it can be in anyone's kitchen.

Granny's Coffee Cake is just one of many products that Cherry offers through her gift company, Cherry on Top. From a shop outside of her family's home in the Rio Grande Valley, Cherry markets and distributes food and gift products to customers looking for something special to share.

"Food says love in a special way. It's a gift from the heart," Cherry says. "Most of the items I offer are homemade. All of them have a homemade feel to them. I want it to seem like they came from your kitchen."

### Lessons Learned From Mom

Cherry credits her mother with passing down her strong desire to share food as a gift.

"I remember my mom piling me and my brothers in the station wagon loaded down with pies, cakes or other goodies to take to family or friends. It was her favorite way of celebrating with someone, or comforting someone who was sick, or even grieving," Cherry says. "I'm the same way."

However, as a busy wife, mother and speech therapist, Cherry did not have the time she wanted to spend baking and cooking, and knew there had to be other women in the same situation. With her husband, Benny, in the fundraising sales business, she began finding products that wouldn't work for his customers, but that fit her criteria.

She began supplying holiday gifts to her friends and family, and had a few customers to whom she supplied corporate gifts. By word of mouth, the customer list kept growing, and Cherry began adding new products. "People kept asking, 'Do you have anything new this year?'" she says.

"I began seeking out other companies like mine, small and dedicated, who specialize in something delicious," Cherry says.

In 2006, she retired from her full-time therapy position and devoted her full attention to Cherry on Top. Today the

business offers a variety of items, including coffee cake, hams, jalapeño-smoked turkeys, peanut brittle, pecan pralines, Texas grapefruit, hand-cut caramels, chocolates, coffee and more. She specializes in preservative-free products from small suppliers who pay close attention to quality, by producing in small batches. Most of the items Cherry on Top offers are made in Texas.

### Everything's Better With a Cherry on Top

In addition to offering special products, Cherry wants her items to look special.

"My hams come wrapped in burlap bags tied with raffia and cherries. The whole thing is tucked in an ice chest. It may look a little ordinary on the outside, but open it up and you find a beautiful gift," Cherry says. "Everything I do is packaged in a special way."

Cherry admits that making each package unique is a little labor-intensive, but because she believes that the anticipation of a gift is sometimes almost as good as the gift itself, the extra work is well worth it.

"It takes a little more time, but the result is something unique, something you couldn't find anywhere else. It says something to the person who receives it," she says.

Customer service is also a top priority for Cherry. While she does have a website, and many customers place orders online, she will usually follow up by phone to confirm details of the online orders.

Granny's Coffee Cake is by far the most popular of Cherry's products. "That cake is what started it all," Cherry admits. "I ship some out every week. I even sent one to my son, when he was serving in Afghanistan."



Two generations of Capital Farm Credit customers — Cherry with her father, Marvin Schwarz.

### A Place to Relax with Family

To unwind from a busy schedule, Cherry and her family frequently visit their ranch about 90 minutes from their home. She and her husband own land that borders properties owned by her brother and her father, Marvin Schwarz. A lifelong rancher and longtime Capital Farm Credit customer, Schwarz recommended the lender to his daughter and son-in-law, when they wanted financing to purchase the property from him.

While the couple doesn't run cattle on their property, Benny does enjoy hunting and they all enjoy the quality family time that being at the ranch allows.

"I was raised in the country and this way of life. I love being outdoors, and I love going out to the ranch," Cherry says.

Cherry also put her father's picture on the labels of her Cowboy Coffee, and is quick to remind customers that the coffee "is the perfect companion to the coffee cake!"

For more information about Cherry on Top Gifts, visit [www.cherryontopgifts.com](http://www.cherryontopgifts.com).

