

Sweet

smell of success

Emily McNamara as Cookie Conwell in "The Chocolate Show"; bottom, Meghan Ross, Charity Farrell and Norma Perez Hernandez in "Peace, Love and Cupcakes: The Musical."

Two musicals centered on sugary delights make it to New York stages

How sweet it is! You can get a sugar rush just by reading the titles of two new Off-Broadway productions. "The Chocolate Show!" is now in previews — just in time for Valentine's Day — and "Peace, Love and Cupcakes: The Musical" is in rehearsals for next month's premiere.

Both family-friendly productions are designed to tempt the taste buds and tickle the funny bone. They also have something else in common: Their creators are passionate about their subjects. Turns out you are what you eat — and so is your musical.

Ask Alan Golub, who wrote the book and music for "The Chocolate Show!" with his lyricist wife Laura Goldfader.

"My wife and I are avid chocolate lovers," he says. "The show is all about the heavenly food."

The musical follows the antics of the chic but kooky Cookie Conwell, whose feign as the World Queen of the Cocoa Bean is coming to an end.

Golub and Goldfader's creative jolt for the show came during a 2005 trip to Costa Rica, where they toured a chocolate plantation.

"The trip opened our eyes about chocolate, where it comes from and much more," says Golub.

When the Park Slope couple considered ideas for a light and breezy show, they recalled that vacation. The action revolves around who will be next to wear the Cocoa Bean crown, which is made of — what else? — solid chocolate.

The answer comes with help from the audience and scenes that unfold like musical portions of a variety

show. Songs include "Chocololics Anonymous," an ode to the sweet,

"Mocha Friday," an upbeat ditty, and "The New Wine," which gently pokes fun at snooty fine-chocolate snobs. "Chocolate makes you smile and feel good," says Golub. "We wanted to write a show that does the same thing."

The team that whipped up "Peace, Love and Cupcakes: The Musical" feels the same way about its sweet treat. "Cupcakes are the way into the story, which is about celebrating friendship and the differences that make us who we are," says Rick Hip-Flores, who wrote the book, music and lyrics. "I'm more of a doughnut man, but I do like cupcakes."

The musical is based on the book series by Upper East Side author Sheryl Berk and her daughter Carrie.

Now 11, Carrie has been reviewing and blogging about cupcakes since she was 7. (Red velvet from Georgetown Cupcake in SoHo is her fave.)

The series is based on her own experiences.

Like the books, the stage version focuses on misfit schoolgirls who form a cupcake club and bond over baking. The club succeeds because they understand teamwork.

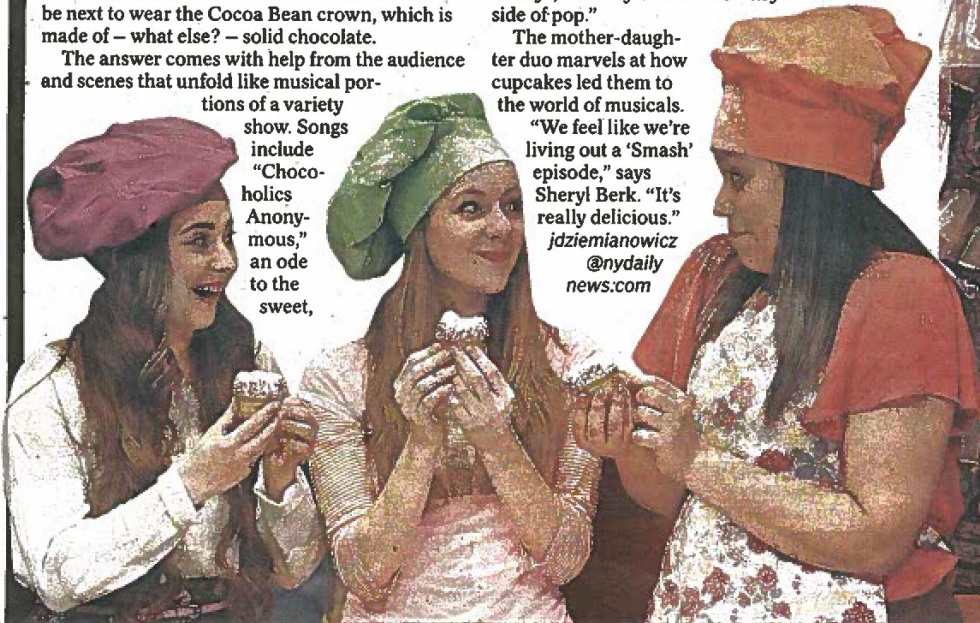
"Each girl discovers her special talent and the power of working together," says Hip-Flores, whose contemporary pop score recalls a cupcake shop with its various musical flavors. Songs are sprinkled with hip hop, rap and, he says, "the Taylor Swift country side of pop."

The mother-daughter duo marvels at how cupcakes led them to the world of musicals.

"We feel like we're living out a 'Smash' episode," says Sheryl Berk. "It's really delicious." jdziedzianowicz@nydailynews.com



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YOU SHOULD KNOW

"The Chocolate Show" is in previews and opens Feb. 14 at 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. Tickets are \$39.50-\$59.50 at (212) 279-4200 or ticketcentral.com. "Peace, Love and Cupcakes: The Musical" runs March 15-April 27 at Vital Theatre Company, 2162 Broadway, at 76th St. Tickets are \$30 at vitaltheatre.org.