

**Fresh Thyme Market Announces Winner of Its Official 10th Birthday Cake Contest**  
*Congratulations to Crystal Stanley, owner of Crystal Kitchen in Bloomington, IL for her winning better-for-you recipe*



**DOWNERS GROVE, ILLINOIS (July 18, 2024)** – [Fresh Thyme Market](#), a full-service, better-for-you natural grocer with 70 stores in 10 states throughout the Midwest, is proud to announce the winner of its 10th Birthday Cake Contest in celebration of the company’s anniversary. After inviting local bakers from across Fresh Thyme’s 10-state footprint in the Midwest to submit their best better-for-you cake recipes, eight semi-finalists were invited to present their cakes at a special judging event at Fresh Thyme’s headquarters in Downers Grove, IL in May. From there, three finalists were selected based on overall presentation, usage of Fresh Thyme ingredients, creativity and taste, and shoppers were encouraged to taste test and vote for their favorite at a birthday party-style event at all Fresh Thyme stores. After more than 6,000 votes were received and tallied, Fresh Thyme Market is delighted to announce Crystal Stanley, owner of Crystal Kitchen in Bloomington, IL is the official winner.

"We are thrilled to celebrate our 10th birthday by recognizing the incredible talent of our local bakers, like Crystal, in such a meaningful way," said Liz Zolcak, president at Fresh Thyme Market. "At Fresh Thyme, we’re passionate about inspiring a healthier future for our communities and we were just blown away by the response and level of creativity and dedication each and every one of our semifinalists brought to this competition. It just goes to show that Fresh Thyme’s broad assortment of innovative and curated items can really spark inspiration in the kitchen, especially as more and more shoppers want options that are healthier for themselves and their families."

Crystal's winning "Morning Glory" cake stood out not only for its presentation but also because it embodies Fresh Thyme's commitment to high-quality ingredients. It showcases how a better-for-you recipe can be just as satisfying and delicious as traditional options, appealing to the food lover in all of us. Inspired by the beloved muffins from Fresh Thyme's in-house bakery, Crystal's recipe features wheat flour, freshly grated carrot and apple, shredded coconut, and specialty ingredients from Fresh Thyme's private label such as organic honey, powdered sugar, organic ground cinnamon, and vanilla extract. These elements add flavor, texture, and moisture, earning her recipe the title of Fresh Thyme's official 10th birthday cake.

Along with this recognition, Crystal will receive \$5,000 and mentorship from a panel of industry experts to help grow her budding small business, Crystal Kitchen, plus a \$5,000 donation made in her honor to the Eastern Illinois Foodbank. At Fresh Thyme, our commitment to investing in our communities is at the heart of everything we do. This dedication is exemplified by our support for Crystal and reinforced by our vital partnerships with local food banks. These collaborations are essential to us, enabling us to make a positive impact in the communities we serve.

"It is such a blessing to have been chosen as the winner of the Fresh Thyme Birthday Cake Competition, and I'm thrilled to help Fresh Thyme celebrate their 10th birthday," said Crystal Stanley, owner of Crystal Kitchen. "I pour my heart into my baking, but I started my business on a shoestring budget. The cash prize and mentorship will be a great help as I continue to provide my community with freshly baked items. The thought of having \$5,000 donated to a local food bank warms my heart, too, because their mission is important to me. I volunteered at a food bank for several years, and the help they give to the community is priceless."

Fresh Thyme Market extends a heartfelt thanks to all semi-finalists for their participation and creativity:

- Amanda Reninger, Sea Salt & Cinnamon - Muncie, IN
- Anwelli Okpue, Wani Cakes - Detroit, MI
- Crystal Stanley, Crystal Kitchen – Bloomington, IL (*winner*)
- Elysia Kramer, Thistle and Knead Gluten Free Bakery - Fort Wayne, IN (*finalist*)
- Lydia Armstrong, Gluten Free Creations - Carmel, IN
- Marguerite Singson, What Margie Made - Chicago, IL
- Megan Elder, Moose and Me Baking Company - Naperville, IL (*finalist*)
- Naya Wiley, The Dessert Apothecary - Portage, Michigan

To learn more and find a Fresh Thyme Market location near you, please visit [freshthyme.com](https://www.freshthyme.com).