

# THE JOURNEY TO BECOMING MAGNOLIA KITCHEN

I love telling this story . . . it is so dear to my heart, and really encapsulates everything that Magnolia Kitchen stands for: memories and family.

Rewind 16 years and there I was—Bernadette (Bets), teenage mum to baby Charlotte, planning a first birthday party. As a young single mum I had a complex. I felt like I was judged for being a teenage mum, for being a single mum, for how I parented—all of it. The reality was that while I'm sure there was some judgement and some people who looked down their noses at me, I really judged myself the hardest.

I took the planning for Charlotte's first birthday party as a way not only to celebrate the achievement of raising a one-year-old but also to show everyone how much of an awesome mum I was. I chose cake as my way to do this. I was dead set on creating something *awesome*, something that would be remembered forever as spectacular. All the mums would see the cake and be blown away by my talent as a mum and a cake maker (insert hysterical laughter here). Needless to say, the cake was a monstrosity, although I wouldn't realise this until years later when I made caking my career.

I made use of the officers' galley where I was posted with the Navy to construct my masterpiece. Using bought sponge cake, I slathered it with apricot jam (I missed the part where the jam was supposed to be smooth, so mine had lumps of apricot in it) and then threw a whole lot of fondant at it. Add in a plastic crown and a tinfoil-covered chopping board, and I was—in my opinion—ready to *show* those mums.

Charlotte and I chose her cake from the old *Women's Weekly* cake book from the library; this would become our tradition for the next five years. We would go to the Navy library and sit down on the floor, and she would choose a cake (y'all know that's a lie, I totally vetoed her choices and chose one *I* wanted to make). Over the years she had a frog, a whale, a pig, a Barbie mermaid and an ice-cream-cone castle . . .

