

Shining Stars

Nine-year-old twins Natalia (left) and Gaby (right) have been up to their elbows in mixing bowls since they were three years old. That's when they started baking cookies and cupcakes during visits to their grandmother's house.

When they were six, their mom made a suggestion. "She told us, hey, it's time that we give back," Gaby says. "So we looked for a charity that we liked and we found one called No Kid Hungry."

Natalia and Gaby made big plans. They called themselves the "Lil Cupcake Girls" and have been baking and selling cupcakes ever since. They have also filled orders for baby showers. Once they made 100 cupcakes for a wedding. They donate the money they earn to No Kid Hungry. The organization

provides meals to kids who might otherwise go hungry.

"Helping others is a great way to be kind and humble," Natalia says. "Plus it just makes me, my mom, and my sister happy."

In the past three years, the girls have raised about \$4,000—that's a lot of cupcakes! Every batch involves planning, shopping, baking, decorating, and packaging. They also have to clean up, like after the time the mixer sent flour flying all over the kitchen in their Florida home.

"Sometimes it's hard," Gaby says, "but then I think of how it's not always easy for them, either—meaning the kids who might be hungry."

To get their work done, Natalia and Gaby bake in batches. "We have a 24-cupcake pan, a 12-cupcake pan, and a six," Natalia says. They make flavors such as red velvet, chocolate, vanilla, strawberry, and strawberry-banana, using sparkling water in the batter to make the cupcakes fluffy. Natalia usually operates the mixer.

"She's great at that," Gaby says. "And if there are chunks

in the batter, she uses a whisk."

The girls take turns frosting and decorating. "Once Gaby decorated a red velvet cupcake with tiny marshmallows, cut up and arranged on the frosting to look like a flower," Natalia says. "She really puts her heart into it."

One of the sweetest things about baking cupcakes to raise money for charity is spending time together, especially when their grandmother comes to help.

"Donating to No Kid Hungry makes me feel proud," Gaby says. "It's important to give back, especially since there are children out there who don't have what they need to eat breakfast, eat lunch, or eat dinner." One cupcake, she says, can make a lot of meals.



You can shine, too.

If you're interested in raising money for a good cause, ask a parent if you can hold your own bake sale and donate the money to a charity you're passionate about. You and a parent can learn more about For Goodness Bake by visiting americangirl.com/fgb-news.

Nice Icing

Gaby and Natalia explain how to frost the perfect cupcake.



- * Make sure your cupcake has cooled down before you add the frosting. If it's still warm, the frosting will melt right off!

We like to use a piping bag when we frost our cupcakes. If you squeeze the piping bag evenly and move it in a circular motion, it creates a pretty frosting swirl.

- * You can use colored frosting to make your cupcake more creative. And don't forget to add your favorite sprinkles when doing the final touches. We also like to use a cute wrapper to dress up the cupcake.

- * Our favorite frosting is our signature cream cheese buttercream.



I like making the buttercream frosting pink and Natalia likes teal or purple.



Go to page 48 to see Gaby and Natalia's yummy buttercream frosting recipe.



Answer these questions, and then turn the page to see how your answers compare to those of other AG readers.

What's your favorite thing to do during the holidays?

- * Open presents
- * Give presents
- * Spend time with family
- * Decorate the house

What kind of gifts do you like to make for your family?

- * Baked goodies
- * Original artwork
- * Holiday cards
- * Handmade fashions

What's the best thing about winter?

- * The holidays
- * Hot chocolate
- * Playing in the snow
- * Ice skating