



COVER STORY

Nov. 18–24, 2005

The Butter Business Bureau

by Mike DeBonis

CakeLove’s product looks good, is made by good-looking people, and has a good story behind it. Does it even matter how it tastes?

CakeLove is a bakery packed into a 600-square-foot storefront on U Street NW; it sells cake and a few other sweets. Across the street is a sister coffeehouse, with fewer than 40 seats, called Love Cafe. The bakery supplies the cafe by sending a stainless-steel cart across the street every morning. Together, the businesses have only 30 employees.

Talk to enough of them about why they work there, though, and despite the small scale, it’s clear the operation already has an unofficial corporate mantra.

- “When I first started, I was asking bakers, ‘Why is it that your cakes taste better, aside from the ingredients?’ and one of our bakers said, ‘Well, it’s because of the passion that we have, of course.’ That was exactly what I wanted to hear.”

—Ellice Pérez, managing director

- “We want to make sure we’re addressing the things we’re passionate about, separate from cooking. We have these different issues that we’d like to bring to the forefront.” —Mary Meyers, corporate baking manager

- “I’ve always really been into baking. Food is just a passion of mine.” —John Peters, general manager, downtown Silver Spring location

- “I took a liking to the company—and his energy, his passion.” —Pérez

“He” is Warren Brown, a 35-year-old, 6-foot-3, dreadlocked Ohio native, Brown University grad, and former government lawyer: the entrepreneur behind an expanding cake empire that began in 1999 in his home kitchen. Recounting the early days of his business, he has some thoughts of his own on passion: “I wasn’t familiar with the term, and the use of the term. When I think of passion, I always thought of Harlequin romance novels....I was just following something I loved to do.”

Since then, he's embraced the word. On CakeLove's Web site is posted an 1,800-word discourse of Brown's on "Cake Passion"—"a commitment without condition," he writes. "It's a lot like love. Passion has meant finding myself happy baking cakes at 1:30 am at the end of an 18-hour day or occasionally smiling while scrubbing cake pans because it means business is still growing."

And he's not shy about talking up the concept in conversation: "I want people to know that...it's themselves they have to go to for the answers in their lives to make them happy, to know how to get their passion."

From these conversations, it becomes clear that CakeLove isn't all about the cake. The cake doesn't draw huge raves from food critics, for example. But the love has been enough to build a rapidly growing empire.

The new show Brown hosts on the Food Network, Sugar Rush, premiered last month, sending him into homes across the country. The manuscript for his new cookbook, tentatively titled *CakeLove: Taking the Mystery out of Cakes From Scratch*, is due to the publisher in January. And in December, the second CakeLove will open, in downtown Silver Spring. The original CakeLove and Love Cafe do brisk business—just over \$1 million in sales last fiscal year.

On a Friday afternoon, Brown tours the new CakeLove's neighborhood—smack in the middle of the neon-and-concrete Silver Sprung. Outside the storefront, in a rehabbed building on Ellsworth Drive, he runs into a Discovery Channel exec he knows from negotiations for another show that didn't work out.

Then he visits his across-the-street neighbor for lunch—a newly opened upscale rotisserie-chicken joint, complete with a decorative fire burning outside the door. Not 10 seconds after he walks in the door, a short blond woman makes a beeline for Brown from the bar.

"Hey, you're Warren, aren't you? Hey look, I watched your show!" Then she turns her voice up to a high-pitched whine. "It was awesome! Very cool. 9:30 Wednesday nights. And you're opening across the street...in December! And it was supposed to open in September!" The whine gets turned up another notch. "Ha ha! That is so cool!"

Brown offers thank yous, but she isn't listening. Before she gets a chance to recount Brown's formative years, she cackles her way back to her barstool.

Minutes before, Brown was holding forth on his public anonymity thus far. Minutes later, his lunch is comped.

Late on a Friday morning, baker Amy Harmon begins making the mortar that holds CakeLove together.

She starts with three pounds of egg whites, which she whips gently in a 15-quart

mixer. On a stove next to the mixer, a simple syrup containing 2-and-a-half pounds of plain sugar is heating. By the time the syrup's ready, at the firm-ball stage, the egg whites are forming firm peaks. Into the mixer goes the syrup. Once it cools down, then in goes the key ingredient: butter—10 pounds of it, unsalted, cut into soft, gooey bricks. They plop into the bowl; the mixer's motor briefly strains.

The process is repeated five or six times a day.

Taste a slice of CakeLove—Brown et al. apply the noun to the product as well as the operation—and you become well-acquainted with butter. It's in the cake itself, lending richness and moisture to the crumb. But more readily apparent, it's slathered everywhere around it, in the form of buttercream. Italian meringue buttercream, to be precise.

Virtually every item on the menu is filled, covered, enrobed, nestled, or injected with it. Vanilla buttercream. Chocolate buttercream. Pastel-pink buttercream. Caramel buttercream. Lemon buttercream. Orange buttercream. Amaretto buttercream. Coconut-vanilla-infused buttercream.

The only interloper, on two items, is ganache, which uses chocolate and heavy cream as a base rather than butter. Only one item has whipped cream, and not to be found on any item, save one pastry, are frostings or icings, which consist of confectioners' sugar held together with just a bit of binder, whether butter, egg whites, cream cheese, other shortening, or just water. At CakeLove, the fat takes center stage.

Ask Brown about his platonic ideal of cake, and—as most people would—he goes back to his childhood, to University Heights, Ohio, a well-to-do Cleveland suburb. To a Kosher bakery—Lax & Mandel, it's called. That's the cake he remembers. “They made this roll cake, basically like a gigantic Ho-Ho,” he says, enraptured. “There was also this marble cake, this vanilla-and-chocolate marble with a dark-chocolate glaze on the outside. Loved it.”

At CakeLove, however, Brown doesn't sell roll cakes or marble cakes. Nor are there sponge cakes or angel's food or génoise or much of anything else in the outer extremities of cake taxonomy. Brown is something of a cake fundamentalist. The vast majority of what CakeLove sells are butter cakes—a classic, sturdy American formulation of flour, sugar, eggs, and, yes, butter. (A few pound cakes and cheesecakes are on the menu, as well.)

And those butter cakes come one way: stacked, usually in three layers. Brown doesn't do sheet cakes, on principle. “I don't believe in that,” he says. “I like filling in the middle. I like something that's there that you can't see.”

When tasting CakeLove, your reaction to the buttercream will almost certainly match your reaction to the product as a whole, and you'll also immediately know whether you're eating the product too cold. If it tastes like a stick of butter straight

out of the refrigerator, well, that's because that is rather close to what you are eating. In fact, Brown chalks up most objections to CakeLove as a failure of "educating the consumer" about the need to let things warm up. Recently, the bakery's embarked on what is deemed the "room-temperature initiative." Newly printed bright-yellow cards now admonish CakeLove consumers to "serve cake a yellow cupcake with raspberry buttercream, another with lemon cream, a pumpkin "Buzz Ball"—a cream-filled puff pastry—and a chocolate cupcake with orange buttercream. All have been warming for several hours.

Sietsema's weekly Web chats, on which local foodies keep a close eye, have become a locus of CakeLove discontent. On the chat a couple of days before, Sietsema deemed the bakery "over-rated," and several participants jumped in to concur. It's not the first time Sietsema's rendered an unfavorable verdict of Brown's product. But he's giving CakeLove another shot, reporting the results over the phone.

"It's not bad," he says, tentatively. "It's not vile; it's not, Ohmigod, I can't believe this is in my mouth! The actual frosting is quite nice on this lemon cupcake that I tried here. It has a real bright lemon taste, and the raspberry cream is really delicate."

The cake itself, however, comes in for more criticism. "It's probably not as fine a crumb as I might like," he says, referring to the body of the cake.

"I think the standard-bearer would probably be a lighter crumb, a lighter texture," he says. "I've eaten a lot of cake in my lifetime, professionally. This is not the European model, certainly... This is something that might appeal more to maybe a younger American audience." But not to him.

And a number of Internet commentators, too. Postings in chats, food blogs, and message boards bear out a definite foodie backlash—much of it since Brown got his Food Network gig. "Because he's famous, they're almost demanding that the actual product line live up to the celebrity," says Don Rockwell, founder of food-discussion site DonRockwell.com. "The majority of people [on the board] tend to feel it falls short. Maybe even the vast majority."

Here's what some of them have said: "I really want to like them, but..."; "drier than the Sahara"; "Took one bite and threw it in the trash"; "the cake seemed grainy and dry"; "cakelove, for some, runs on legend."

Ask a number of people about Warren Brown—friends, relatives, journalists, people who have never met him—and you'll get as many variations on the Warren Brown legend. All, of course, can be reduced to the basic elements: He was a lawyer; now he's a baker. Or you can add a few elements. Meyers tells a nice, plain, to-the-point version.

"He would come home from work, bake, stay up late, deliver cakes in the

morning, go to work, buy ingredients at lunch, work on recipes in his head on the way home,” she says, walking across U Street NW, from CakeLove to Love Cafe. “Everyone would like to think it was, Add water, instant CakeLove.”

Actually, no one who knows anything about CakeLove thinks that. More likely, they know some history before they eat the cake. For those unfamiliar with the tale from the pages of the *Washington Post*, the *Washington City Paper*, *People, Inc.*, *Reader’s Digest*, *Southern Living*, *Black Enterprise*, the *American Lawyer*, *Kiplinger’s Personal Finance*, the *Washington Times*, *Washingtonian*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, *Brown Alumni Monthly*, the George Washington University alumni magazine, or the book *What Should I Do With My Life?*—or spots on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Today*, *Dateline NBC*, *Fox News Sunday*, four different Food Network programs, and the Fine Living Network’s *Radical Sabbaticals*—the CakeLove Web site offers a primer: “The Cakelove Story: A testimonial straight from the fingertips of Warren Brown.”

An alternate title might have been “The Passion of Warren Brown.” Not the small-p passion, either. The essay reads somewhere between a political manifesto and a religious tract, as told in parables: The eureka moment, when he first realized the potential in selling cakes while carrying a chocolate cake through JFK Airport. His breakthrough on a Green Line Metro train heading home, which led to his trademark (and trademarked) New German Chocolate cake. The “epiphany moment,” when a pattern of orange slices on top of a cake reduced him to tears. His hospitalization for exhaustion from trying to bake cakes and be a lawyer at the same time.

And, in conversation, Brown’s just as comfortable recounting key elements of the story. “I was walking through the airport and people were like, ‘Ohmigod, you made that cake! You made that cake!’ Every person I passed looked at me,” he says. “When I got to my destination, I kinda thought about it, Gee, that was weird. I got looks from chicks, and all the security guards were all friendly-smiley- ‘Yeah!’ ...What was different about this situation? Cake. Well, that thing has some power.”

Cake may be powerful, but so’s a good backstory. For one thing, it’s populated his business with a staff that’s a cut above the high-turnover norm of the food business. Meyers, for example, left an advertising job to work at the bakery soon after it opened. Brown hired her with no professional baking experience; as she recalls, her interview was light on technical baking lingo. “It was about sweets, and the enjoyment of sweets, the understanding of how they work in people’s lives and the culture,” she says. “The fact that we’ve very much become a fast-food nation and people are really looking for instant gratification and how do we slow that down a little bit.” She’s now corporate baking manager. Peters eased out of a job as a Riggs Bank paralegal and into a customer-service position. He’s now general manager of the Silver Spring store. Another baker, Joanna Goode, left a job as a copy editor for *Kiplinger’s Personal Finance*—inspired by a piece

the magazine had done on Brown—to join the business. She’s head baker at the U Street location.

Other stories take the redemptive powers of CakeLove well beyond career satisfaction. One U Street employee, Jasmin Hedgpeth, credits CakeLove with curing the migraines she had daily while working a job at Sears.

And propagating the legend has never been a problem. Brown set his sights high from the very beginning. He called a reporter friend for media-relations advice early on. “I called him, and I said, ‘Malcolm, how do I get on Oprah?’ He’s like... ‘You can’t just call Oprah. You have to start local. News feeds on news. Start local and let it grow.’ I said, ‘All right. That’s good advice. I can work with that.’ ”

He was on Oprah not three years later, in 2003. Would have been earlier if not for 9/11—he was scheduled to be on a “quarter-life crisis”—themed show that was to tape Sept. 13, 2001.

Page through Brown’s press clips, and you’ll read little about many aspects of Brown’s business. Virtually no mention is ever made of tasting Brown’s cake, what exactly his product is, how it’s made, or whether it’s any good or not.

And forget for a moment the less marketable details of Brown’s life—such as his stint as a sex-education teacher before he became a lawyer. (That’s the real reason he went to law school, he says: to stand up to school boards to get better sex-ed materials.) Forget, also, that his former job as a GS-12 for the Department of Health and Human Services doing fraud litigation wasn’t exactly the same as being a junior partner at Baker & McKenzie.

“That’s the thing that’s funny. I didn’t really take a pay cut,” Brown says. “A lot of people say, ‘Oh, here’s this corporate lawyer who made hundreds of thousands of dollars and gave all that up.’ And I’m like, ‘Dude, try \$48K, no savings, not even able to save anything.... I’m just paying rent, having a little bit of fun, collecting debt, and that’s it.’ ”

One episode in the myth of Warren Brown that doesn’t typically make it into coverage is perhaps the most crucial to his success: his first run-in with media celebrity. As in the time he ran into *Post* food writer Judith Weinraub.

Brown was at La Cuisine, an Alexandria culinary-supply shop, engaged in a playful argument about the purity of buttercream—his was melting and someone else suggested, to his horror, that he add Crisco. That’s when Weinraub, listening on intrigued, approached him and asked who he was. She handed him her business card. “I looked down. It says, ‘Food writer, *Washington Post*.’ I was like, I’ve got a story for you!”

Shortly thereafter, Brown took several cakes to the *Post* Food-section office and met with Weinraub and the Food editor at the time. “I saw the rest of the food staff

kind of migrating in—Walter Nicholls, Renee Schettler, a couple other people. And I said, This is it; this is your moment. So I got up—my elevator speech, you know. Here’s what I’m doing; this is why I do it...enjoy. Middle of the day, Food-section office.”

The speech wasn’t quite the crucial moment of glory Brown thinks it is. To paraphrase Jerry Maguire, he had them at “lawyer.”

Weinraub and her colleagues were sold, cake or no cake. “That wasn’t it. We’re reporters; we knew right away this was a great story. He did bring in the cakes and everything, but...that’s not the main event. The main event is his story that, God willing, has good recipes to go with it.”

And so Weinraub tracked Brown’s progress from the day they met, in October 2000, to the day Brown cleaned out his desk at HHS three months later to start in the cake business full-time. The piece came out in March 2001. By July, he was one of *People’s* Top 50 Bachelors.

Since the initial piece, Weinraub has become the closest thing CakeLove has to a chronicler. When Brown opened the bakery, she wrote it up. When he inked the Food Network contract this summer, he got Page 1 coverage in the section.

It helps that Brown is an almost ideal interviewee. He’s friendly, literate, articulate, comfortable opening up to probing questions. And he’s used his skills well.

“He was certainly not insensitive to the potential impact that having a story in the *Post* would have,” Weinraub says. “I’d ask him a question, and he’d answer it, knowing what I was asking him....A lot of people have no idea.”

Weinraub sees Brown’s story as having great appeal to the Washington psyche: excellent education, government job. “He offers an alternate way of being in this city, and very few people have the courage to try that, so that’s enormously powerful,” she says. “And he’s also really cute, too.”

Meyers tells a story about a woman and her mother who once visited the store. “The woman was in her 60s or 70s; the mother was probably in her 80s or 90s—must have been her 90s—and said, ‘Your cakes taste like the cakes my mother used to make,’ ” she says. “And for us, that was one of the best compliments we ever could receive.”

It’s no surprise that the woman was so old. When that woman’s mother made a cake 80 years ago, she didn’t have a choice but to make it from scratch. There weren’t any “Moist Deluxe” or “Moist Supreme” or “SuperMoist” mixes in the box. In the decades since their postwar rise, however, cake mixes have become cupboard staples: They’re easy, they’re reliable, and they taste good—fluffy and, thanks to the use of vegetable oil and shelf-stable trans fats instead of butter, plenty moist. For millions of children since that era, Mom’s cake was Duncan

Hines.

So how did Brown build a business on a product that's denser, drier, less sweet than most people are accustomed to? Remember the airport parable: All those people who were so impressed by Brown's cake? They'd never tasted it. The taste was beside the point.

Brown's shrewdest move may have been ditching an early name for the business —WEB's Cakes, after his initials—and equating the passion with the product. CakeLove's marketing is closely intertwined with the product. The tagline on the bakery's logos and signs reads, "Cakes from scratch." And "scratch" is a term that Brown mentions a lot. It's what he's selling—the promise not only that someone made his cakes from flour, eggs, sugar, and butter, but also that there's a sense of propriety, even righteousness about that.

It's not really nostalgia so much as it's about the way things ought to be." A "throwback to simpler times," as Brown puts it, that never were for most of us. If CakeLove's customers have a real nostalgia, Brown may not even cater to it. Red velvet cake, for example—Brown won't make the Southern favorite for one reason: The red dye isn't natural.

Brown's purism is something he can afford. The days of the corner bakery have been long over in most parts of the country, so the demand for ready-made cake is slaked mostly by supermarkets or discount warehouses, which sell light and moist, oil-based cakes with sugary frosting. They're cheap, and they're tasty.

But it's not scratch, and scratch is hard to come by in this city these days.

"We don't have a lot of places in Washington where you can go get dessert," Sietsema says. "It's a question I get a lot from readers.... 'Where do you go for dessert?' 'Where can I buy a nice cake that's not made by [Palena owner and pastry chef] Ann Amernick or...something that's going to require me to take out a loan?'"

And Washington has eaten it up: Sietsema be damned, CakeLove won the latest *Post* readers' choice poll for best bakery, beating out such places as Firehook Bakery and Marvelous Market that not only have multiple locations and a wider audience, but sell other baked goods besides cake. When Washingtonians think "bakery," CakeLove has permeated their psyches to the point that bakeries need offer no bread.

CakeLove itself feels less like a bakery and more like the trendy boutiques on its block. Even if you've somehow avoided hearing about its hip owner, to get to the shop, you go to one of D.C.'s hippest neighborhoods, and then you go inside, underneath the modernist weathered-steel sign. The shop itself is appointed in stainless steel and brushed aluminum, with multicolored tiles and cheery walls. Music plays in the background. The baking area is exposed, showing the young, multiculti staff at work. These may be Grandma's cakes, but Grandma sure ain't

baking them.

Brown deems CakeLove's look "indigenous," after a term he read in a restaurant magazine. "People want to go to a place to eat that they feel familiar at," he says. So "I wanted a sleek, modern, urban, kinda masculine kinda feel, so I chose yellow as the color, because it's a bright color that's happy but it's gender neutral."

No pink walls translates into no piped roses or swags on his cakes, either. The look of the cakes mirrors the look of the store itself: sleek and smooth. The minimalist motif works its way down to the business model: Keep it simple. There are fewer than a dozen butter cakes on the menu. No fancy molds. No custom cakes.

The same goes across the street at Love Cafe, with its rotating selection of art from local galleries and '80s hits piped in. There's coffee, cake, sandwiches, and salads. Good, simple stuff, nothing fancy—encouraged by the fact that there's room for nothing but the most rudimentary prep equipment. "People want basic comfort food," Brown says. "They want BLTs and grilled cheese. Don't mess with it. Don't put weird stuff in the chicken salad or the tuna salad. Make it pretty basic."

Basic is the business model you want if you plan to build a retail cake empire, and that's what Brown has in mind. "I want CakeLove in major metropolitan cities," he says. "I want CakeLove to grow in the same fashion as a Hard Rock Cafe plus Ben & Jerry's plus some element of ubiquitousness."

Brown's cake imperialism, he says, isn't all about growing his company into a superprofitable corporate megalith. Instead, he posits CakeLove as a way to work instead toward self-actualization, personal happiness, and world peace. Seriously.

"Part of what I really want to do is utilize the fact that people come to us infrequently, for special occasions, and I want to show them other parts of the world, I want to show them other cultures," he says. "You know, if we eventually have CakeLove, like, in Japan, we'll have a Japanese couple of items on the menu, and you ain't gonna get it in the United States version of a CakeLove, but maybe we'll also have a way that people can learn about...culture, a little tradition here in Japan, that has or doesn't have anything to do with cake, but has to do with the experience of living."

The précis of Brown's vision is what he calls "Make CakeLove, not war." It's a vision of a harmonious world, brought together through gâteaux.

Brown is a bit of an unreconstructed military nut, filtered through an Ivy League education. In his childhood, Brown built and painted models of tanks and artillery, World War II mostly. (At one point, Brown says, "You can go to Jane's Defence and look at the world through the eyes of weapons systems. You can go to CakeLove and look at the world through the eyes of cake.")

The models he'd like to build these days are made out of burnt sugar, not polystyrene. "[I thought], Can I turn this into a model tank? 'Cause if I could do that, I could do my full diorama of 'Make CakeLove, not war,'" he says. "You got paratroopers; they're coming down, they're armed with their whisks and their bowls, and they're throwing grenades of fondant."

Says Brown: "I'm trying to show people what's inside my head in this business."

Warren Brown has cooked on the side his entire life. As kid, during the summer, his mom made him cook lunch for the family once or twice a week. When the Brown nest emptied, he prepared dinners—burritos, sweet-and-sour chicken—for himself out of necessity. When he was in college and law school, weekend house suppers were a regular thing.

The thing about being a culinary superstar is that, between the tapings, the media appearances, and the business negotiations, he's still only cooking on the side. And in the face of national celebrity, his business is getting pushed even further aside.

To keep the bakery's affairs in order, Brown hired his first "managing director," Pérez, in August. Last year, Pérez was a George Washington University MBA student; Brown visited a class of hers to give a talk on entrepreneurship. Pérez introduced herself after class and kept in touch with him until he gave her a job 10 months later.

Pérez has a background in international development and an Apprentice-like focus on the project at hand. What she doesn't have is an office. Most weekdays, she sets up her laptop in Love Cafe, communicating with Brown and others via BlackBerry. Her job description is pretty simple. "My role is to assume the responsibilities that he had, to free him up for most of his media tasks," she says. Brown puts it another way: "freeing up mental real estate." "It's really allowed me to concentrate on the show, to give good appearance and good schtick to what I'm doing on camera," he says. "It allowed me to focus on the book I'm writing...which I've needed to do for a long time."

So as Brown travels the country for Sugar Rush, Pérez is busy implementing, say, the room-temperature initiative. There are new point-of-service terminals going in, with new software to automate the process of ordering provisions. Making the business tick.

But Pérez also has another job: keeping the empire growing. As proposals for new stores trickle in, she evaluates them. Places such as Fairfax, North Carolina, and, she says coyly, "overseas." And as the Silver Spring store gears up, she's been keeping track of the process, developing procedures to follow when opening new stores. With a little time, a little capital, the imperial march will continue.

"We don't need to be as many units as Starbucks—5,000 CakeLoves wouldn't do

anyone any justice.... We only really need five to seven CakeLoves in a metropolitan area of D.C., perhaps even a little bit less,” Brown says. But “I wanna replicate CakeLove and bring it to my hometown, both coasts, cities in between. I want to take CakeLove outside the United States. ‘Make CakeLove, not war’ only is possible if the community doesn’t have walls.”

Before Brown can conquer war, he needs to conquer Clarendon. The next step is to take CakeLove to Virginia’s close-in bastion of gentrification by the end of next year. Then there’s Sugar Rush, which is still pending renewal. The cookbook, too, which is scheduled to be out next fall, in time for the holidays.

And who knows who else will want him? “This guy called me in the springtime,” Brown says. “He said, ‘Can you make a candy-bar prototype?’—he saw me in Inc. magazine—and I said, ‘I’d love to try,’ because he said he was going to make something for a big sports franchise.”

He’s in the kitchen of the apartment near Cardozo High School he’s rented since 1999; he finds the candy samples, a byproduct of his experiments. “It’s chocolate, ginger, curry, toffee, and almonds. The idea is, imagine it being twice as thick as what you’re chewing on.... Imagine it’s that depth, that footprint, three of them or four of them individually wrapped in a little foil—waxed foil—in a small, little paper box that’s nice, a little gifty thing. And sell that through fine gourmet stores, things like that.”

“A company in Georgia we’re talking with made that,” he says. “I gave them the recipe; I sent them some samples.... We talked. So we’re in the process of making sure the prototypes can work.”

It’s tasty, curry and chocolate, a little heat on the back end. Out of the fridge, the texture’s a little dense, though.

Before he got that call, Brown had never made candy before. Makes sense, though—self-taught cook, self-taught baker. Now a self-taught candy man.

And a self-taught businessman. Brown’s an avid consumer of business press. Business section, business books—he reads them regularly. He’s making his way through Ugly Americans, about unscrupulous bond traders in Asia. He’s read Ben & Jerry’s book, *Double Dip; Pour Your Heart Into It*, by former Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz; and Jack Welch’s book, too. (“Not a lot there I can do much with,” he says. “We’re not gonna let go of 20 percent of our staff every year. We’re also not going to actively try to pollute the whole Hudson River Valley.”) The last book he finished, though, is *Losing Your Virginity*—Richard Branson’s memoir about his travails with his Virgin companies.

Virgin: It’s just Branson all day, all night. There’s a business that’s almost completely personality-driven.

“That’s great!” Brown interjects. “It’s infectious... I was like, This guy’s

brilliant!” CP

Questions? Comments? [Send us a message.](#)

[back to the top](#)



[Classifieds](#) | [Personals](#) | [Restaurants](#) | [Showtimes](#) | [Music, Arts & Events Listings](#)
[City Lights](#) | [Cover Story](#) | [Loose Lips](#) | [Dept. of Media](#) | [inD.C.](#) | [Back Issues](#)

Copyright © 2007 Washington Free Weekly Inc.