

H O M E T O W N PASADENA

Heartbreak Cake

By [Kat Ward](#)

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"What are you daydreaming about?"

"I'm thinking about cake. Big, multilayered cakes that are squeezed in between more layers of buttercream or chocolate ganache."

"How can you still be thinking about cake? I've had enough cake today to last me the week, if not more."

"How dare you," I tease...

When [Cindy Arora](#), author of *Heartbreak Cake*, mentions in the dedication that her reading of Jackie Collins' *The Bitch* was her

hook—she actually writes, "I was never quite the same again"—I thought, uh-oh. Primarily because I've read only one Jackie Collins publication and after I slogged through the first third, I began speed reading—first line of a paragraph, last line of a paragraph—interested in the story enough to want to find out what happens but so annoyed by the quality of writing that I couldn't stand to read every word, let alone the dialogue or to acknowledge the excessive use of italics and exclamation points. For example, by the second page of Collins' newest release, *The Goddess of Vengeance*, readers have had to endure the phrases "juvenile skank" and "cheating rat" along with "surreptitious" glances and "a dangerously seductive woman." And yet, the author of this has had every book of hers—all twenty-nine—on the *New York Times* bestseller list, has sold over 400 million book copies internationally, and is reportedly worth \$180 million. "Yeah, yeah, rub it in."

I'm happy to report that Cindy Arora is no Jackie Collins.

Heartbreak Cake is unabashedly chic lit, a lighthearted and quick read (I consumed it in a few hours), but Arora has command of the style. The writing reflects the genre without being cloyingly cute, trying-too-hard hip, or faux witty.

Indira Aguilar is in business with Pedro and they have invested all their funds in an "indie" bakery (I assume that means independent, as in not part of a chain, but sounds cooler) called Cake Pan Bakeshoppe, located in an up-and-coming hip, literary, and artsy part of Long Beach. Indira has her faults and is going through the customary angst and life implosion, yet she is still a smart and talented woman who can "parallel park like a ninja." The story has the bad boy

lover, the jealous and vengeful woman, and the potential dreamboat, which is par for the course, but Arora's hand at the helm keeps the story rolling and the characters engaging with dialogue that rings relatively true (or at least not decidedly false).

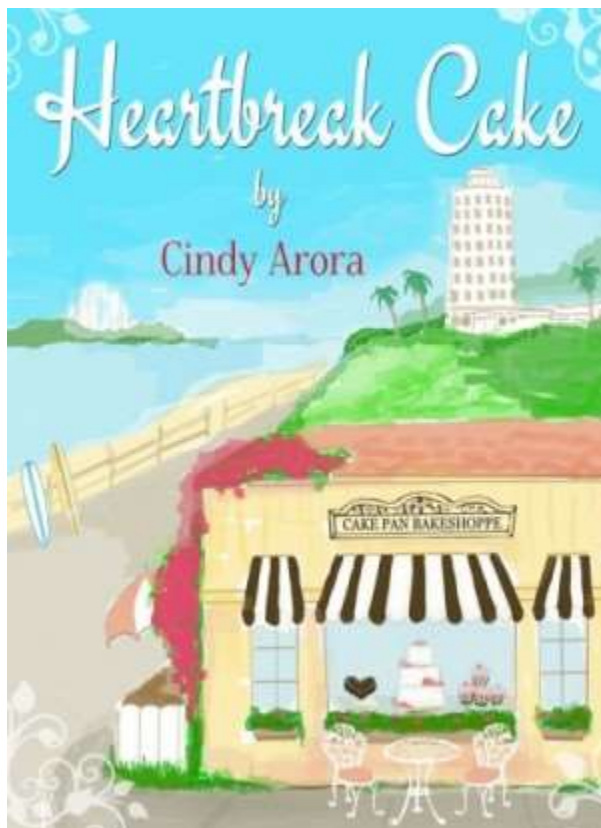
In one's life story, there are scenes where you can actually see yourself making the wrong choice. You turn left instead of right, and you take one last lingering look behind you, but it's too late. The choice has already been made. I knew I was supposed to get on that bus ride home and settle in for a night of chocolate, wine, and the Hallmark channel.

But I didn't leave. I went back inside that restaurant with him, and I fell in love.

Yes, there are the split infinitives, the requisite chocolate references, and the "talking" directly to the reader, but that's chic lit. [Chic Lit Books](#) defines chic lit as "a genre comprised of books that are mainly written *by women for women*.... There is usually a personal, light, and humorous tone to the books.... The plots usually consist of women experiencing usual life issues... told in a more confiding, personal tone. It's like having a best friend tell you about her life." And so it is written.

That summer I may have lost one love, but I ended up finding my true love. It just so happened to be butter.

Heartbreak Cake hits all the correct beats of the genre. It's also humorous, endearing, snarky, fresh, charmingly "feel good," and makes one year—even ache—for cake. For the right mood and moment, it's a perfect snack.



Photo, top right: Heartbreak cake created by [HERS Bakery](#)

