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Morning Glory

Baked goods and pastries rise to an art form in the city that first swooned over croissants 20 years ago.

BY CLAIRE Z. CRAMER



COREY TEMPLETON

Everybody must get scones: Morning temptations at Tandem Coffee and Bakery.

HUNGRY EYE

We marvel at the sheer number of restaurants in the Forest City, but how about the *bakeries*? Portland is the center of the universe for from-scratch, flakey, buttery, first-class baked treats. Hot, fresh scones; lighter-than-air croissants; deadly sweet sticky buns; cookies; breads; and rolls are baked every day in small, thriving hives all over town.

MAGNET FOR TALENT

Think of Standard Baking Company as the Harvard of Portland bakeries. People with sweet dreams and magic hands come to them. And if they leave, Standard's legend grows deeper in the culture. "The caliber and availability of professional baking training has improved vastly since we first opened," says Alison Pray, who with husband Matt James owns Standard Baking, now 20 years old. Their croissants, morning buns, and baguettes were the original *boulangerie* delicacies that set a very high bar in Portland.

"We've been really fortunate to have

But what if wheat is out...

"I went gluten-free myself about eight years ago," says Bevin McNulty, owner and baker of **Bam Bam Bakery** on Commercial Street. "I found the products on the market weren't very delicious."

Bevin began experimenting with her own recipes and studying alternative baking. "Gluten is the protein in wheat; that's what binds your bread and gives it elasticity and keep it together. We use xanthan gum" to replace this quality, along with precise combinations of other non-wheat flours depending on the item.

Gluten-free does have something of an image problem. "The biggest misperception is that it tastes gross-dry and gross and boring," says McNulty. One bite of a Funky Monkey (peanut butter, chocolate chip, and coconut cookie) should clear this up. It's delicate, rich, and intense. Bam Bam's most popular items are "whoopie pies in the summer and lemon bars and cookies in general." Look for pumpkin whoopies with maple filling this fall. —Becca Carifio



Catherine Coté-Eliot pauses to reflect for a moment at Portland Patisserie.

found some great people through these programs." Some of whom are now dazzling diners at some of the hot spots elsewhere downtown, as this story shows.

"Our greatest challenge as bread bakers is consistency," says Pray. "At the same time, we love to bake, so we're always looking for new ideas and inspiration. I love to travel specifically to visit bakeries. In Paris, friends recommended Des Pains et des Idées, in the Marais. There are lines out their door all day long. My favorite from their shop was a *pain au levain* roll with savory additions like bacon and bleu cheese."

TASTY CAREER U-TURNS

Bakers are like doctors," says Catherine Coté-Eliot, pastry chef at Portland Patisserie on Market Street, where dainty and precise French confections including cylindrical *framboisiers* and colorful macarons dazzle on platters and stands. "We all have our specialties. I'm really not all that into breads." Which is not to say she doesn't know how. In fact, Coté-Eliot, 34, spent five years making bread and pastries at Standard Baking.

"Baking's my second career," she says. "I have a degree in architecture from Ohio State. But then I did a 10-month course

at the French Culinary Institute in Manhattan," after which she ended up baking at one of the Financier Patisseries in the financial district. "I have a French last name (Coté), a French Canadian background, and a grandmother in Gouldsboro, but I don't speak French."

Her husband, Frederic Eliot does; he's chef at Petite Jacqueline, which is owned, like Portland Patisserie, by the talented Steve and Michelle Corry. So how did Catherine meet this Parisian-born chef?

"At O.S.U., actually. Cooking is a second career for Fred, too. He was the head of the university's IT department, and just before I left for a semester in France, I went to ask him about good places to visit." The couple moved to New York, where Catherine launched her pastry career and Fred "cooked all over—Prune, Le Cirque, the Oak Room."

When they started a family, they decided to move to Portland. Frederic's nighttime schedule dovetailed nicely with Catherine's dawn baking routine in terms of sharing child-care duties. "I didn't want a desk job," she says, "but I feel my architecture training is useful to me as a baker. I'm designing and creating things every day."

She sure is. Her tender, buttery bourbon

Portland's Bakeries

(A Selection)

Ameera Bread
845 Forest Ave.

Aurora Provisions
64 Pine St., auroraprovisions.com

Bam Bam Bakery
267 Commercial St., bambambakery.com

Big Sky Bread Company
536 Deering Ave. & 28 Monument Square,
mainebread.com

Borealis Breads & Bistro
182 Ocean Ave.

Dutch's
28 Preble St., dutchsportland.com

East End Cupcakes
426 Fore St., eastendcupcake.com

Foley's Cakes
1 Monument Way, foleyscakes.com

Katie Made Bakery
181 Congress St., katiemadebakery.com

Love K cupcakes
28 Monument Sq., lovekcupcakesinc.com

Portland Patisserie and Grand Café
46 Market St., portlandpatisserie.com

Rosemont Market & Bakery
40 Pine St., rosemontmarket.com

Standard Baking Co.
75 Commercial St., standardbakingco.com

Tandem Coffee + Bakery
742 Congress St., tandemcoffee.com

Ten Ten Pié
171 Cumberland Ave.

Two Fat Cats Bakery
47 India St., twofatcatsbakery.com

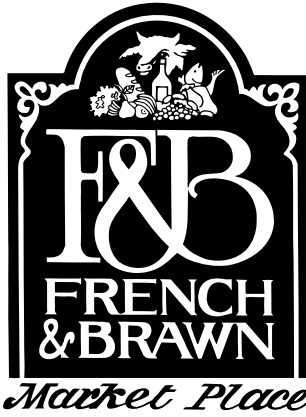
pecan shortbread cookie with a cup of coffee may be the tastiest treat you have all day.

SCONE SOUL PICNIC

"Briana and I met in New York," says baker Laura Motley at Tandem Bakery on Congress Street. "We baked together at Pies 'n' Thighs in Brooklyn." Briana Holt is Tandem's baker extraordinaire, from whose boundless imagination spring spicy ginger and toasted white chocolate cookies the size of lunch plates, dainty rye shortbread cookies rimmed with black sesame seeds and a hint of sea salt, and "loaded biscuits" filled with cream cheese and jam.

"I get a feeling about something," says Holt, "and try to access my experiences and general baking knowledge to make it happen."

Tandem Bakery has been open barely a year; it's already a West End institution—a bright, airy space of plate-glass windows, a



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HUNGRY EYE

spotless open kitchen, and a long counter full of tempting baked goods. As I visit today, boxes of fresh blueberry pies with almond crumb topping are stacked on the counter, ready to be taken home for dessert. Signature scones include pineapple/rosemary, kale/parmesan, apple/feta, and “everything seeded.” The latter is what happens when a bagel concept is reincarnated as a feather-light scone topped with sesame and poppy seeds and a whisper of garlic, and pastry shot through with visible veins of cream cheese.

“The everything scone was a done deal in my mind,” says Briana. “It’s exponentially gotten more rad. It’s my not-so-secret favorite thing we make.” For Holt, the soul of a scone should be “amazing butter flavor, a perfect biscuity interior, and a firm, satisfying crunch on the outside.”

The Martha’s Vineyard native grew up baking with her mother and Austria-born grandmother, including lots of cookies at Christmas time—“hundreds of cookies cooling on counters, on the porch, the bathroom counter—we always had a problem with quantity control. I think I may still have it.”




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She says her aim is “to make scone lovers of scone haters.” Mission accomplished! Tandem really has the edge here—Briana Holt owns the scone.

TAKE-OUT, DELUXE EDITION

“We get up at four,” says Lucy Dutch as she takes a brunch order at the counter at Dutch’s on Preble Street. She and husband, Belfast native Ian Dutch, turn out delicious breakfast and lunch creations and bake every bagel, biscuit, and loaf from scratch six days a week. Lucy’s croissant is balanced in flakiness and cakey tenderness. She came by her skills by hands-on restaurant work. “I’ve cooked around, I baked a lot, I collect recipes and cookbooks.”



Dutch’s turns out elegant versions of simple things. Even buttered whole-wheat toast with their own spectacular blueberry jam will make you take notice. There are excellent and distinctive whole-wheat loaves all over town, including at nearby Big Sky Bakery. But Lucy’s has a soulful charm that makes a great sandwich.

CHOICES, CHOICES

If you roam the city’s bakeries, you’ll find exotic surprises at Ten Ten Pié on Cumberland Avenue at the bottom of Munjoy Hill. Atsuko Fujimoto—she’s another former Standard Baking alumna and Fore Street restaurant pastry chef—is dreaming up fusions of classic French pastries with world-beat imagination. Try almond croissants dusted with matcha green tea confectioner’s sugar, tiny *financier*-like tartlets called *visitadines*, and bite-size dark double-chocolate sake cakes shaped like fat corks.

Among the trends here to stay: interesting use of rye flour in sweets (Standard Baking’s chocolate rye cookies, for one) and delicate dust-

ings of sea salt crystals and seeds on sweet as well as savory treats. “It’s a daily struggle for me to *not* put them on literally everything!” says Briana Holt.

Even old favorites are up in lights here. Visualize something you never tire of. Say it’s a fresh croissant, or an oatmeal raisin cookie. The city is your oyster! You can seek the perfect cookie forever without ever having to endure disappointment. Rosemont’s bakery stocks its three city markets every day, and their cookies are fantastic. Standard Baking’s oatmeal cookie is as sweet as a happy childhood. Big Sky is always there for you when you’re running errands in Monument Square. A recent stop at Two Fat Cats on India Street turned up a surprise. This little bakeshop, once a spin-off of Standard Baking but now independent, has a rather *provençal* facade in a pleasing shade of Dijon Poupon. You descend into a cellar-like space filled with racks of pies and cakes...and spot the cookies! On the way home with your oatmeal raisin prize you discover bits of dried apricot in addition to the raisins. Brilliant! ■

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