

New bakery rises in Silverton

Newcomer bakes up scrumptious concoctions

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SILVERTON – While most people are still asleep, Molly Ainsley brews a quad latte and ties a starchy white apron around her waist.

She turns on a David Bowie mix one of her daughters compiled for her and begins to put ingredients on the sizeable cutting board table, which takes up the majority of her kitchen.

A little of this, a little of that: flour, eggs, sugar and cinnamon. Ainsley lovingly whisks them all in a thick batter that's then placed into a large tray of tins. The muffins are on racks cooling before it is even 7 a.m.

Rolling Hills Bakery, located on First Street in Silverton, is Ainsley's first independent business endeavor – and quite a successful one at that. After being open for little more than one month, her café business is already booming, and she's even considering expanding the space and her offerings.

While Ainsley serves house favorites like mango-coconut muffins for the morning meal, her regular clientele still push for full breakfasts.

“Right now I just don't have the time or the room to serve regular breakfast,” she says as she rolls her popular “Sorta Bagels” — a non-boiled version of the chewy mainstay — in a mixture of poppy, sunflower and sesame seeds. “I'm going to hire someone soon, so hopefully that can be a possibility.”

Her café boasts a multitude of homemade goodies, from breads and muffins to pies and coffees. And the woman behind Rolling Hills and the delectable (and secret) recipes discovered her passion in baking late in life.

She was born and raised in Texas and eventually moved to Olympia, Wash. There Ainsley began her professional career in sociology. She later switched to pursue another interest, this time in the film business, which she continued from about 1998 to 2004.

Her transition to baking was a “spiritual one,” she made after realizing that she “loved films but hated the industry,” she says.

And then she tried being a cook for a “premier catering company” in Texas, but realized that the work was too impersonal, she says.

“I like being able to talk to my customers,” Ainsley says. “And it’s definitely an ego-booster when someone tries my food and says that it’s perfect.”

By now, it’s almost 9 a.m., and she’s already made two batches of giant muffins and has begun baking several loaves of variations of both white and whole-wheat breads. According to Ainsley, she is running late.

A bit quirky, Ainsley teases herself for sometimes talking to her ingredients.

“Hey, we all have a connection to everything in the world,” she explains. “We’re connected to each other and even to our food.”

This connection she speaks of is exactly why she found Silverton so appealing in the first place. Not only is the weather much nicer than Olympia’s constant dreariness, but everyone in Silverton is “so open and willing to create community,” she says.

“Everyone I’ve met here so far are people who love life and encourage people,” Ainsley says. “They just want to be happy, and it shows.”

Lisa Jorgensen is one of the café’s regular self-proclaimed “foodaholics.”

Right as the doors unlock, she walks in, wanting her menu favorite: the mango-coconut muffin.

“We need this place,” Jorgensen says. “We have other coffee shops and cafés in town, but the quality here is great. We want to see Molly [Ainsley] stay. She’s a real asset to Silverton.”

Thus far, Jorgensen’s statement renders true: Ainsley has already been approached by local restaurants that want to market her bread, and she’s even given thought to creating a line of her unusually flavored spreads for her Sorta Bagels (try a cream-cheese spread with olives and cherries or one containing sun-dried tomatoes and raisins).

In the mean time, though, Ainsley is sticking to what she does best – rising early to create the goods that have instantly become a local favorite.

“I think that when you love what you do, it shows in your work,” Ainsley said. “It’s like in the book ‘Like Water For Chocolate’ when people feel the baker’s pain through eating her wedding cake. Only here, I think people love my baking so much because I love making it.”