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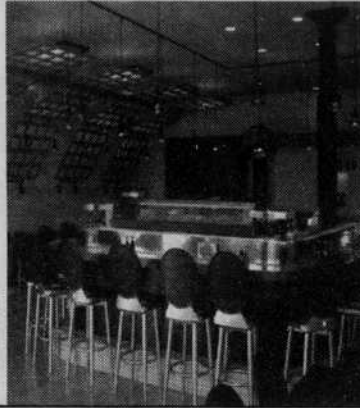
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Get a taste of Sweet Life

Organic coffee and unique pastries attract Eugene dwellers to this sweet and savory bakery

Aaron Shakra
Pulse Reporter

High wood ceilings, white brick walls, black chairs and tables, multiple display cases filled with countless baked goods, a bustling staff in the back and Beck and Talking Heads alternating on the stereo. This is a brief snapshot of Sweet Life Patisserie on a given day.

The bakery, located at 755 Monroe St., is well-known for its cakes. However, it's also a cafe, serving pastries and organic coffee along with the rest of the usual suspects — chai, cappuccino, espresso and a diverse selection of teas.

Cheryl Reinhart, who co-owns the bakery with her sister Catherine, moved to Eugene from the East Coast about 10 years ago. The two sisters started the bakery shortly afterward in a garage, where it remained for six years. It is now in the midst of its third year at its current location, and employs 20 people. The patisserie was recently named "best bakery" in the Eugene Weekly reader's poll — it had previously been awarded "best sweets."

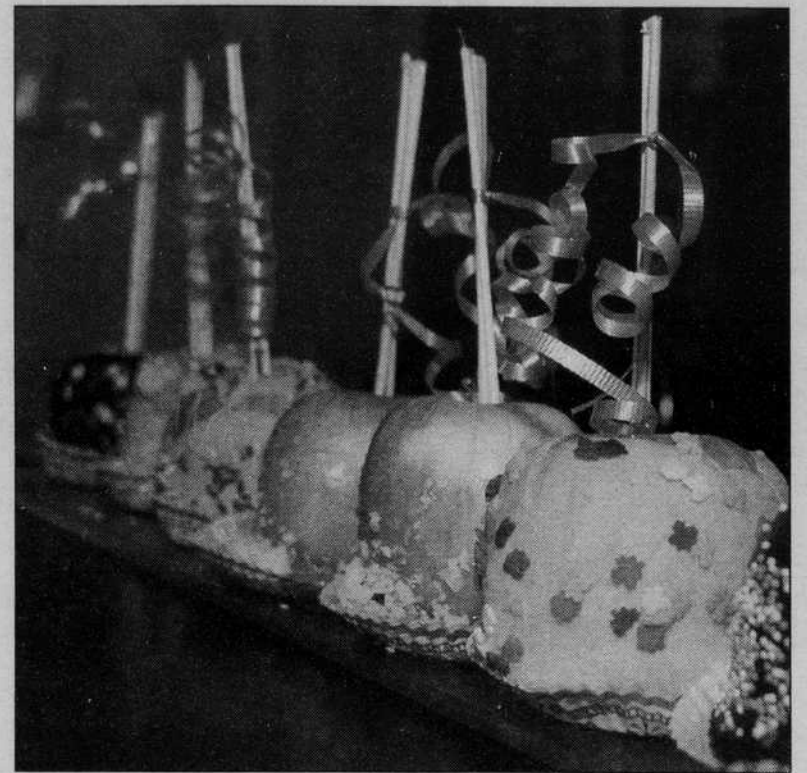
"It's probably more successful than I even thought it could be," Reinhart said.

Robin Retherford has worked as a morning baker at Sweet Life for three years. She arrives for work at 5 a.m. on weekdays and 6 a.m. on weekends. She said baking is both an art and a science.

"It's hard work," said Retherford. "It's a real intuitive thing, it's this flow."

Retherford noted that timers aren't used for any of the items coming from the ovens of Sweet Life — the bakers just know when something is finished.

All the pastries at Sweet Life are made from scratch and use largely organic ingredients. Many of the bakery's offerings are available in vegan or gluten-free alternatives. Exotic offerings include an orange-mango Bundt cake, gingerbread



Jeremy Forrest Emerald

Candy apples decorated with orange caramel and Halloween decorations are only one of a large variety of pastries and baked goods that Sweet Life has to offer. They also offer cakes such as a strawberry and kiwi vegan cheesecake and a chocolate chocolate cake.

scones, raspberry buttercrunch bars, lemon macadamia cookies and cranberry-raisin-pumpkin muffins. Chocolate is prolific across-the-board.

"We specialize in all forms of chocolate," Reinhart said.

In addition to the cakes on display, there is a separate menu of the varieties available for order. Two of the more popular offerings are the tiramisu — espresso and rum-soaked sponge cake — and "Chocolate Orgasm," with chocolate orange mousse, Bavarian, white chocolate and Irish creams. The bakery frequently offers specialty cakes which are not on the regular menu.

Reinhart said baking is an artistic endeavor.

"It's fun to bake," she said. "There is so much creativity in the stuff we have here."

Reinhart is an active member in

the community, and Sweet Life makes donations to a plethora of nonprofit and other organizations.

"I definitely feel motivated to do community work," she said.

Barista Ted Adams said that the cafe's location draws all types of people — "hippies, families and young bohemian-types."

"We get some crazies, but they're allowed to sit outside and kick it as long as they don't bother the people," Adams said.

The bakery has recently expanded its hours to better cater to customers. It's now open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Thursday and Friday, from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday and from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday.

"It's sweet," Adams said.

Contact the Pulse reporter at aaronshakra@dailymerald.com.

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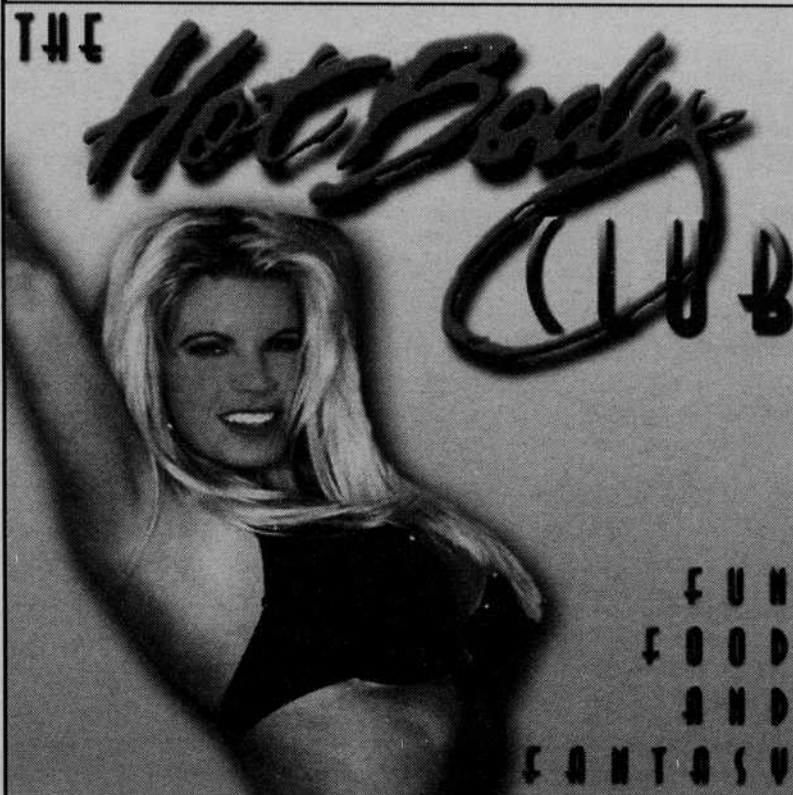
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