

Gia's Gluten Free Bakery

BY SIOUX ROGERS

The day finally arrived when I actually walked into a bakery. I had not done this in years, after finally realizing how gluten intolerant I am. However, on this day, famished and desperate for a companion for my mug of coffee, I came to a screeching halt when I saw the small sign in Phoenix, Oregon, reading “Gia’s Gluten Free Bakery.” I could have gained weight just on the alluring aroma inside the door.

Doug Reding, the partner and son of Jan Thorsell, the baker, was about as sweet as the morsels in the cases. Actually I wanted something not too sweet, so Doug suggested the marionberry coffee cake. It was freshly baked and still warm. OMG. The texture was light and fluffy perfection. The taste was better than any marionberry coffee cake I have ever tasted—not too sweet and I could really taste the marionberries. In other words, I am now dreaming of Gia’s Gluten Free Bakery. (Gia is Jan’s Italian name—she is half Sicilian.)

As a result of “finding” this hidden treasure right in the heart of Phoenix on the main highway, I became obsessed about finding out more about this small but growing little endeavor.

Seems as though all, or at least most, of the gluten-free businesses and their products were started because someone in the family had a major gluten problem. Gia’s is no different. Jan Thorsell lived with undiagnosed celiac disease for many years and was finally correctly diagnosed in 1980. (Celiac disease is a condition that damages the lining of the small intestine and prevents it from absorbing parts of food that are important for staying healthy. The damage is due to a reaction to eating gluten, which is found in wheat, barley, rye, and possibly oats. Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0001280/>.) After this diagnosis, she began paying attention to what she ate and read the labels on every package of anything she opened. Along the way, she

reclaimed her life and her health.

Jan is extremely knowledgeable about celiac disease and many of the related diseases associated with the gluten found in wheat and some other grains. This short article does not allow me the space to pass along much of what Jan taught me. If you’re interested, search “foods containing gluten.” You will be dumbfounded at what you will discover.

Jan has always adored baking, and does all the baking for Gia’s. Even though she has been baking for her family most of her life, gluten-free baking was an entirely new adventure. Jan started her new endeavor by taking a few intensive workshops. She said it was like being in a laboratory using over 18 gluten-free flours. Her ultimate goal with every gluten-free product is texture and taste. Texture is the biggest challenge. Another huge hurdle is the ability to buy baking products that are certified gluten free. This means the product has been tested as having no cross-contamination with any product of gluten origin.

Jan tastes all the new bakery items first. Then Doug and friends get the second

round to critique. While developing the first new recipes, Jan actually was throwing out more of her baking than she kept. Doug said he was calling her the “Edison of the baking world” because she was experimenting so much.

Down to the practical yummy side, Jan will bake special orders if given at least a week’s heads-up. The availability of pastries may vary from day to day, but the standby favorites of lemon bars, several varieties of large cookies, and coffee cake always can be bought. Doug said his hands-down favorite is the chocolate cream pie, but Jan said hers is the simple madeleine. I find it hard to choose after going back and sampling several times.

Gia’s is located at 310 North Main Street, Phoenix, OR 97535. Phone: 541-512-7469. Hours of operation: Tuesday through Friday, 10:00 am - 6:00 pm; Saturday, 10:00 am – 4 pm.

Try them—you will love them. And you will soon see their product in some of your favorite coffee shops.

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Gia's Gluten Free Bakery recently opened its doors on Main Street in Phoenix.



Doug Reding, co-owner with baker Jan Thorsell, will help you make some tough decisions.

GIA'S GLUTEN FREE BAKERY
www.giasglutenfree.com
310 N Main St | Phoenix, OR 97535 (541) 512-7469
Tues - Fri 10am to 6pm, Sat 10am to 4pm, Closed Sun & Mon

Daily: Chocolate Chip Cookies, Peanut Butter Cookies, Oatmeal Raisin Cookies, Brownies, Muffins, Lemon Bars, Coffee Cake, Raspberry Financiers and Madeleines

Rotated: Carrot Cake, Chocolate Cake, Apple Turnovers, Cherry Turnovers, Chocolate Cream Pie, Banana Cream Pie, Pumpkin Pie Chocolate Pudding and more!

Grocery Items: Canyon Bakehouse 7-Grain, White, Cinnamon Raisin, Herb Focaccia Bread and Hamburger Buns. Parbaked Ciabatta Rolls, Sourdough Baguettes and Sandwich Rolls. Pasta, Licorice, Soup Stocks, Gravy Mixes, Pizza Crust Mix, Pancake and Waffle Mix, Granola and more!

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Steelhead fishing on the Applegate river. Photo by Rich Holstrum.

“The middle class is teetering on the brink of collapse just as surely as AIG was in the fall of 2009—only this time, it’s not just one giant insurance company (and its banking counterparties) facing disaster, it’s tens of millions of hardworking Americans who played by the rules.”
—Arianna Huffington

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