

The Healthy Bread Store



www.daveskillerbread.com
www.naturebake.com

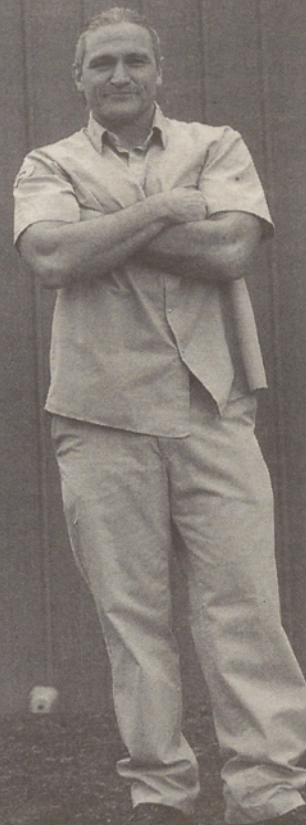


PHOTO BY JENNIFER JANSONS

Above, Dave Dahl next to his signature logo for Dave's Killer Bread. Below, one of several of Dahl's mugshots from many years past, featured in the book, "Good Seed."

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beginning his sentence of 115 months in prison for assault, delivery of a controlled substance, and possession of a firearm. He served more than seven years and was released early due to his completion of a drug program.

By December 2004, Dave had spent more than 15 years of his life incarcerated. But this last round of prison had been different. He'd learned computer-aided drafting and

was good at it. The drug treatment program had left him clean, and determined to stay that way. And he had decided to return to the family bread-making business.

"This particular time I had the humility and the acceptance, and the hope — I had all those things," he says. "I knew where I was, I knew where I'd been. I accepted who I was at the time."

He started working at the bread store for \$10 an hour, mixing loaves and subbing for absent bakers. Finding housing was difficult for Dave,

considering his past crimes and his status as an ex-convict. "I lived with my mom at first," he says. "I wasn't able to get actual housing — or, my choice of housing, as you'd expect. You think if you have a certain amount of money you can get a certain amount of housing. Well that's not true with criminals, with ex-cons, if you have a criminal record. Getting housing is very tricky. I was just going to accept whatever housing I could get. Again, I was comparing it to prison. I was like, OK, you can't throw me in any place worse than I've already been. I'm still going to be able to get up and walk outside and go do what I want to do."

About a year and a half ago, Dave purchased his own home, and his worries about securing housing for himself were over. But the situation remains daunting for countless other ex-cons being released from prison who need to find a place to stay.

"One thing you have a problem with when you're in those shoes," he says, "is that most bigger apartment complexes are operated by property management companies, and have certain insurance and certain rules they go by. This person is a risk, and so their insurance won't allow it. Also if you're a law-abiding citizen who has an apartment, you may not really want an ex-con like an armed robber, a drug dealer, moving in next to you. It's totally understandable that you kind of have to start at the bottom."

In addition to filling in for bakers and emptying bread loaf pans, Dave began to experiment with mixing a new kind of bread. Prison had given him plenty of time to reflect on his upbringing in a bread-making business, and after 15 years of prison-issued white-bread sandwiches, he longed for a heavier, grainier loaf. Out of this experimentation came his "Blues" bread, a delicious cornmeal-crust loaf of bread that he says looked so beautiful that he hated to cut into it. This "Blues" loaf was the most expensive sandwich bread Nature Bake had ever produced, but they knew it was something special. Dave's brother Glenn encouraged him to call his invention "Dave's Bread." Meanwhile, Dave had grown attached to the title "Killer Bread," but given his history, he wasn't so sure using the phrase "killer" in conjunction with his name was a good idea. Eventually "Dave's Killer Bread" was born, and rather than hide his past, Dave told it on every bag of bread he sold. He gives a nod to his own past drug addiction, and emphasizes a preservative-free loaf with the phrase "Just say NO to bread on drugs."

He knows well the difficulty associated with kicking a drug habit.

"It really comes down to, have you had enough yet?" Dave says. "For me, I don't know what would have stopped me if it hadn't been for prison. I went to prison so many times, and that last time I'd just had enough. I said you know what, I can either die, or spend the rest of my life in prison." Dave sometimes had dreams while incarcerated that he had committed further, serious crimes that meant life in prison. He'd awaken with his heart pounding, and then have a rush of relief to realize he only had five more years of a sentence left.

"These dreams made a big difference to me," he says. "Taking antidepressant

medication worked for me, and also going to school, but all of that wouldn't have worked for me without me making a decision that I'd had enough. And really, sometimes you make that decision two or three times. Or maybe 10 times, before you actually do it. So it's not an easy thing to do."

In August of 2005, Dave and his nephew Shobi debuted Dave's Killer Bread at Saturday Market in the Park Blocks in downtown Portland, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. By the fall, Dave's Killer Bread was available in grocery stores such as New Seasons, Peoples' Co-op, Food Front and the Alberta Street Co-op. Soon to follow: Whole Foods and Fred Meyer, and eventually Costco. Today, Dave's bread is now available in the northwest from Alaska to California, as well as Idaho, Montana and Utah.

Varinthorn's introduction to Dave's Killer Bread came by way of her husband, who she says fell in love with the bread "in a very extreme way." Because she'd grown up on Thailand's rice-based diet, Varinthorn wasn't accustomed to eating much bread, but she soon came around to share her husband's affection for the new brand. By now, she had lived in Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, and South Dakota, where she'd finished her BFA in painting. Before moving to Portland, she lived in Alaska, where her practice included creating giant sculptures and paintings. On a walk one day, she saw up close evidence of glaciers impacted by global warming, and that day when she returned to her studio and saw the scale of what she was making, she felt a little sick to her stomach at the amount and size of the materials she was using.

"My epiphany was that I should do something more social, that other people can relate to. If I was going to count in food miles when I ate, why couldn't I make my work environmentally friendly and sustainable too?"

Varinthorn applied to Portland State University's MFA program in Art and Social Practice and began in 2007. The program emphasizes the community component in art-making, and often means an artist works directly with a particular group of people, such as elementary school students, local

Dave's Killer Bread donates more than 75,000 loaves a year to local food charities, such as the Oregon Food Bank, Loaves and Fishes, Helping Hands.

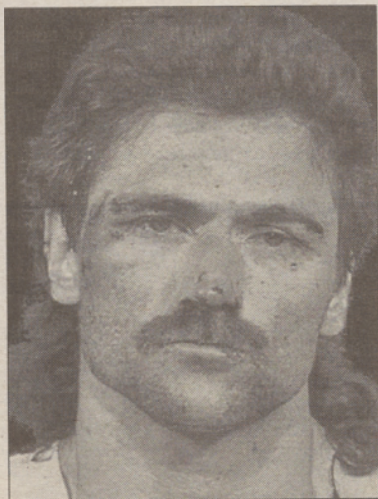


PHOTO COURTESY OF VARINTHORN CHRISTOPHER AND DAVE DAHL.

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