



Rising at Sunrise

Baker Bill Hotchkiss feeds more than the body.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MELISSA BEARNS

The bell above the door of the Sunrise Sourdough Bakery in Philomath chimes and another customer walks from the crisp chill of a sunny fall day into the 100-degree heat of the room. The young woman pauses, inhaling deeply, breathing in the sweet, yeasty smell of rising dough mixed with the aroma of the whole wheat, yellow potato and oat bread

that's baking in one of the three wide black ovens.

All day long people drop in, the chiming of the bell marking their arrival — men in business suits, moms with kids in tow, young men in ripped jeans, old friends in town for just a few hours. They come for the crusty loaves of vegan, organic, sourdough bread that Bill Hotchkiss carefully lines up on a metal rack, the shelves filling up with

different types of bread that he slides out of the ovens throughout the day. They come in the morning for the sticky, gooey whole wheat cinnamon rolls, loaded with sweet raisins, made with apple juice and brown sugar. Then they come back later for the pumpernickel rye with caraway seeds or the garlic onion bread.

They come to warm up inside the sunny room where the walls are painted with bright yellows and splatters of red, decorated with intricate batiks and small tapestries. They stop by to check the black chalkboard on the wall with today's "menu," and to ask when the

bread they want will be ready. And they come to hang out with Bill.

After 17 years, he's a legend in this small town of just more than 4,000. He started the bakery with a partner back in 1988 but, "The bakery wasn't making money that first year and we had to decide who wanted to keep the business," Hotchkiss said. "And I definitely did."

Fit and wiry, with a prickly gray stubble, Hotchkiss, 57, greets his customers by name as they walk through his door. He glides across the room to give a quick hug, then moves back to the tasks at hand: He walks briskly from the Hobart where the dough for yeast-free French bread with sunflowers is mixing, brushes yellow cornmeal off the wide, flat boards he uses to slide the bread in and out of the ovens, then walks over to the piles of dough he neatly measured just minutes before and shapes them into loaves.

In the early '80s Hotchkiss was living in Massachusetts and delivering bread for the

'I'd rather chase time than money. Because that's the only true freedom there is.'

— *Bill Hotchkiss*



Hotchkiss has customers make their own change out of a cigar box he's had since he opened the store. He adopted the honor system from farm stands in Iowa where he grew up.

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