

A SWEET EXPERIENCE



The fresh smell of bread wafts from the open door at Cannon Beach Bakery.

BY DAVID CAMPICHE

When I turned 15 in 1963, I procured a job with Earl Kaufman at the Cottage Bakery in Long Beach, Washington. Kaufman was a mountain of a man with wrists as round as Babe Ruth's bat. He worked fast, hard and efficiently. I struggled in the beginning, fearful my engagement would be short-lived.

It was there I began to develop a work ethic. Kaufman was nicknamed "Great Balls of Fire," and he lived up to the reputation. The bakery was famous for bear claws, glazed doughnuts, breads, pies and more. A local quest for sweet baked goods ordained the place the hub for Fonzie-like appetites and a Mecca for sweet desserts.

The bakery generally sold out by noon.

The sweetest award

When I stumbled upon the Cannon Beach Bakery, I felt as if I had completed a 50 year space travel into the realm of my youth. The bakery had recently been designated the "Sweetest Full Line Bakery in America" by Dawn Foods, a global manufacturer and ingredients supplier. It seemed like a perfect time to check it out and to satisfy my ever-present sweet tooth and nostalgic rumblings.

The bakery is a welcoming spot in Cannon Beach with an angled door which remains open (weather permitting) and invites customers in with the aroma of freshly made breads, pastries and espresso coffee.

Staying fresh

On my two separate visits, one in the morning and one in the late afternoon, there was a distinct difference in the amount of baked goods available – which is not a bad thing. For a bakery, their reputation lies with serving fresh baked items, and the goal is to sell out every day.



Co-owner Gib Hammond making bread at Cannon Beach Bakery.

So, to see them selling out mid-week, shoulder-season is a good sign. Cannon Beach Bakery is enjoyed by locals and tourists. The dedication of owners Gib and Deanna Hammond attests to their continued success.

Haystack Bread

A glass display case holds an abundant selection of pastries. Bread racks in the rear show different bread offerings. Their coffee is supplied by the venerable Longbottom Coffee roaster and distributor out of Hillsboro.

Cannon Beach Bakery, established in 1932, is home to the trademarked "Original Haystack Bread." Of



Cannon Beach Bakery's "Haystack Bread."

course I had to try it. The bakers produce loaves and fluffy golden rolls from this same recipe. The "Haystack Roll" would make an excellent hamburger bun, and the bread has a consistent crumb. I enjoyed it toasted.

On the menu

A waist-high counter lined with stools faces the busy street, the perfect spot for enjoying a treat while people watching in Cannon Beach. The bakery also serves up tempting sandwiches and hefty slices of quiche. There are seasonal changes in the baked products, and the holidays give bakers the opportunity to feature time-honored traditional items that linger in their customers' memories.

My wife and I tried the almond bear claw, shortbread cookie (in the shape of Haystack Rock), honey oat bran muffin, cinnamon roll and the Haystack cookie.

The Haystack cookie was particularly good — more substantive than its cousin, the coconut macaroon. I enjoyed the flavor and natural sweetness of the coconut and dried fruit and nut additions. It was chewy and moist on the inside and crispy outside.

The cinnamon roll does not disappoint, but be sure to have it warmed up. It was baked to perfection – a powdered sugar glaze topped the pastry like winter snow on Mt. Hood.

Foremost in my memory of my early initiation into the world of baking is the resounding commitment to early hours and the engagement of hardworking people. The bakers at Cannon Beach Bakery know the scenario of three o'clock alarms and long hours on their feet. I certainly commend the Hammond's on their due diligence. Those values reflect the reality of their sweet, successful small business.