

Opinion/Table Hoppin': Bean Counter heir to Crown Bakery recipes

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News this summer that Alice Lombardi of the **Bean Counter Bakery** was ready to produce **Crown Bakery's** famous Swedish coffee ring after Crown permanently closed stormed social media.

"The response has been unbelievable," said Lombardi, longtime friend of Crown's retired owner Jon Lundstrom, who gifted Lombardi with his bakery's original recipes. "We're very honored to be part of this," said Lombardi, "and customers are really happy and excited that some of Crown's traditional and most popular baked goods are back. Customers come from as far as the Cape and Rhode Island for the pastries."

Keeping the products on the local scene is important to both these successful entrepreneurs who have always have taken great pride in their unsurpassed quality products.

The Bean Counter currently is rolling out not only the Swedish coffee ring, but also Crown's recipe for braids and cinnamon buns. Lombardi said she expects items like the Princess Torte (a traditional celebration cake in Sweden), Crown's beloved jelly rolls, nut triangles, Mazarin (almond-filled pastries) and more will be available for the holidays.

Products are sold at the Bean Counter's Shrewsbury and Highland Street stores and the newly opened Grove Street flagship location. "They go fast, and once they sell out, customers aren't able to get them until the next day," said Lombardi. Items also can be pre-ordered.

Lundstrom and Crown's retired production manager and pastry chef Lennart (Lenny) Soderman spent time at the Bean Counter working with bakery product manager Doug Alves before the baked goods hit the shelf. "It was like a test run," said Lundstrom. Alves, a former business owner,

has been at the Bean Counter for 10 years.

Lombardi recalled a funny story about being ready to take on Crown's recipes. "Lenny (Soderman) kidded with me saying I was ready for the job when he saw me get out of my Volvo," laughed Lombardi. (Volvo is headquartered in Sweden.) "And when I told Jon that I had bought a Revent rack oven for the kitchen, he smiled and said, 'Oh, Revent is a Swedish company.'

"Pastry chefs at Crown made product with love, and we're doing the same at the Bean Counter," said Lombardi. "I'm so happy Jon chose us.

"People crave comfort food right now," said Lombardi. "And, local businesses are providing it."

Lundstrom said he wasn't worried about giving the recipes to Lombardi because she's devoted to her craft and pays attention to detail. "She really loves what she does," he said.

What's the secret behind Crown's specialties that makes them irresistible?

It's all about almond paste, which adds flavor and moisture, according to Lundstrom. "Cardamom, of course," he said. "It has to be the right amount."

"You don't want to mess with tradition," said Lombardi. "Crown pastries are legendary."

Lundstrom leased the bakery space on Gold Star Boulevard in Worcester after his retirement three years ago. He had worked in the business for 23 years, taking over from his father who owned and operated the bakery for more than 20 years.

This Swedish bakery has 60 years of history in the city, dating back to a time when the president of Astra Pharmaceutical in Worcester advertised for bakers in Sweden, said Lundstrom.

When the bakery closed, lifelong customers phoned and asked him to bring back baked goods, or if there was a place where they could buy them, he said. The bakery also provided pastries for Swedish celebrations and festivals, and Lundstrom sold to a retailer on the Cape.

Jen LaPointe, who had been a cake decorator at Crown since 2000, bought the bakery with her husband, Edward LaPointe, in 2017. The couple operated the bakery up until June, when they permanently closed the business.

Lundstrom owns the building on Gold Star and said he recently signed a lease with someone plans to open a Brazilian meat market in the former bakery space sometime in October.

In May, Lombardi opened her Grove Street location, not far away from Crown.

She said she contacted Lundstrom when he retired about taking over the bakery space, but that he already had committed to the LaPointes. “Things happen for a reason,” she said.

The Bean Counter Bakery & Café on Grove Street now is the primary bakery where customers pick up custom-made and specialty cakes ordered at other Bean Counter locations. There’s parking, in addition to indoor and outdoor seating. For more information, visit

www.beancounterbakery.com.

Are you ready to get your fika (Swedish for coffee break) on?

Chuck’s offering outdoor dining through Labor Day

Dining under the tent at Chuck’s Steakhouse in Auburn continues through Labor Day weekend.

Outdoor dining has been a big hit, in addition to “Cocktails to Go,” according to Chuck’s owners. The restaurant also offers customers the option to buy a Butcher Box, \$70, complete with two New York strips, two top sirloins, four Angus burgers and a bottle of Teriyaki Sauce.

Call the restaurant, (508) 832-2553, for more information, reservations and online catering orders.

Visit www.chucks.com.

File under, restaurants adapt and innovate during coronavirus!

BBQ & Brews night at Davis Farmland

It’s All-You-Can-Eat BBQ from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. Aug. 29 at Davis Farmland in Sterling. This is a 21+plus BBQ & Brews night.

Tickets, \$39.95 each, are on sale now. Cost includes BBQ prepared by pitmaster Josh Freda, live entertainment, games and more. Tickets are limited and will not be available at the gate the night of the barbecue. Also, season passes and regular park admission tickets are not valid. Beverages will be available for purchase. For more information, visit <https://davisfarmland.com>.

All guests and employees will have temperatures checked before entering the farm; masks and social distancing required.

Adult piñatas from Julio’s

If you're tired of "wine in the backyard," this promotion from **Julio's Liquors** (www.juliosliquors.com) in Westboro might interest you.

On a recent email newsletter the store included photos and information about adult piñatas filled with nips.

The store's shark piñata filled with 20 (50ml) nip bottles cost \$49.99 and includes four each of Fireball Whiskey, Dr. McGillicuddy's Cherry, Blackheart Spiced Rum, Platinum 7x Vodka and Pama Pomegranate Liqueur.

The Coronavirus Pinata (smash the virus and get the prizes) contains 12 nips, \$54.99 — two each of Jim Beam Fire, Bacardi Spiced Rum, Paddy's Irish Whiskey, Allen's Cold Brew, Tuaca Italian Brandy and Platinum 7x Vodka.

Wine from Snoop Dog

It's National Red Wine Day on Aug. 28.

The PR folks representing Snoop Dog recommend toasting the event with "Snoop Cali Red," the rapper's namesake and first California bottling from Australian wine brand 19 Crimes.

The wine, launched nationwide in July, is a red blend of Lodi-sourced Petite Sirah (65 percent), Zinfandel (30 percent) and Merlot (5 percent). All American oak reportedly offers a distinct smoky component that also yields vanilla and chocolate. Suggested retail for 19 Crimes Snoop Cali Red is \$12.

The new wine "comes alive" by downloading the Living Wine Labels App, "an innovative augmented reality experience that will bring the rapper-entrepreneur to life from the bottle." Visit <https://www.19crimes.com> for more information.

In conjunction with the launch of Snoop Cali Red, the 19 Crimes brand will donate \$100,000 to the NAACP Legal Fund. "19 Crimes was born from individuals that overcome adversity, and we are proud to support the NAACP in their fight to seek justice for people who are unfairly facing incarceration, for simply expressing the same outrage that we all now feel," said John Wardley, vice president of marketing Treasury Wine Estates. In addition to their initial donation, the 19 Crimes team also is working with the NAACP on a longer-term plan to provide continued support, he said.

File under: Toasting with red wine is good any time.

If you have a tidbit for the column, call (508) 868-5282. Send email to bhoulefood@gmail.com.

What's for dinner tonight?

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