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To Donut or Not

By Susie Iventosch



From left, Cheng Ngauv, Julie Vilaysak Ngauv and John Hopper Photos Susie Iventosch

I'm not one to gorge on donuts, so when I dropped in to check out Johnny's Donuts in Lafayette, I didn't expect to walk away with a box full of delicious buttermilk bars, chocolate old-fashioned, glazed and coconut topped breakfast treats. Johnny's makes amazing donuts and despite having been in the same location for 30 years, I'd never been there until early December.

Seng Vilaysak is the owner of the donut shop, but since he has two other locations, his sister and brother-in-law, Julie Vilaysak Ngauv and Cheng Ngauv, have operated the Lafayette store for the past 21 years.

Cheng says there are several secrets to making good donuts. Beside a little loving care, these include how long the dough is allowed to rise and then how long the donuts proof before baking.

"The oil temperature is very important," he said. "It must be 375 degrees. And the best kind of oil is soybean oil."

He also added that for cream filled or jelly filled donuts, he makes them to order so they don't get soggy sitting on the shelf.

John Hopper (unrelated to the man who originally founded Johnny's Donuts before Seng purchased the company) lived in Lafayette for 30 years before he relocated to Rossmoor.

"I used to make the hand-painted signs for the shop," he noted. "I still come in three to four times a week to get a donut and coffee. They have the best donuts

anywhere."

For the regular men's breakfast meeting at his church, Hopper always brings Johnny's donuts when it's his turn to provide breakfast goodies.

"The group always knows they're from Johnny's because they are the best donuts around," he said.

Since I have no idea how to make donuts, and if I tried they'd probably be hard as bricks and pale in comparison to Johnny's, there is no donut recipe to worry about this week! Nope, this time you'll have to run down to Johnny's and pick up a donut or two, because they are wonderful. And, if you feel like baking, here is my rendition of the good old sour cream coffee cake, made with yogurt instead of sour cream. This way, you can save a few calories for indulging at Johnny's!



Johnny's Donuts 3629 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Lafayette, 925/283-9352

Yogurt Pecan Coffee Cake



Photos Susie Iventosch

Cake

½ cup margarine or butter, softened
1½ cups granulated sugar
3 eggs
1½ teaspoons vanilla
3 cups all-purpose flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
1½ teaspoons baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
1½ cups plain low-fat yogurt

In a medium bowl, sift together flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt. In a larger bowl, cream butter (or margarine) and sugar with electric beater. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each (this is really important for this recipe.) Blend in vanilla. Add flour mixture alternately with yogurt, beginning and ending with dries. Mix well. See assembly below.

Cinnamon-Pecan Filling

1 cup brown sugar
¼ cup granulated sugar
¾ cup coarsely chopped toasted pecans
½ teaspoon cinnamon
Mix well.

To Assemble Coffee Cake

Grease either a 10-inch tube pan or 10-inch Bundt pan with cooking spray. Sprinkle ¼ of the filling on the bottom of pan. Spread 1/3 of the cake batter over filling, taking care not to mix with topping. Repeat process two times, ending with final ¼ filling. Bake in 350-degree oven for 45 minutes, or until a cake tester inserted in center of coffee cake comes out clean. Cool in pan and when cool, turn out upside down onto plate. Store in airtight container until ready to use.

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