

Cookies, Please!

By Susie Iventosch



Elsie's lemon bars

Photo Susie Iventosch

As you wander the aisles at Diablo Foods, you may notice a new addition to the bakery selection, a most fabulous line of cookies called Cookies, Please! The store features six or so flavors on a regular basis, in addition to a delightful Meyer lemon cheesecake on cookie crust ... in two sizes, perfect for two or a party of 10!

"I love her, I love her, I love her," said Diablo Foods' Connie Collier of Christine Johnson, cookie creator and owner of Cookies, Please. "She grew up shopping in our store with her mom and dad, and I am so pleased to be her first retail partner. Christine began selling at the local farmers' markets, and I love to pull vendors in from that venue. I want to bring the farmers' market to Diablo Foods seven days a week."

For Johnson, who is a graduate of Campolindo High School and Tante Marie's Cooking School in San Francisco, baking was always a gratifying pastime.

"Baking has always centered

me," she said. "If I had a fight with a boyfriend, was stressed or had problems to work out, I would head to the kitchen to bake. It helped me work through my problems and made me feel good, happy."

As a child, Johnson fondly remembers baking Swedish treats with her grandmother and coming home to her mom baking chocolate chip cookies. She has shared her grandmother Elsie's Lemon Bars in this week's column, and they are divine. I have already made them twice, and used a combination of Meyer and Eureka lemons each time.

Though she has always worked in the restaurant business, Johnson waited tables or tended bar until opening her own cookie business two years ago. She has worked at a parade of local eateries including Freddie's Pizza, Rocking Horse Saloon, Bing Crosby's and Italian Colors in Oakland's Montclair district.

Johnson does not want to try too many newfangled cookies, but does

like to add a new twist to a simple cookie. For example, she uses lemon chips in her lemon cookies and cinnamon chips in her snickerdoodles, something I had never seen before! Both her husband, Peter Curlee, and their son, William, are the beneficiaries of her cookie creativity. Peter is known as the "Cookie Man" as he brings samples to his customers, suppliers and sub-contractors.

"They are my test market," she pointed out.

The full cookie assortment includes: snickerdoodles, chocolate toffee pecan, peanut butter with chocolate and peanut butter chips, oatmeal chocolate chip, oatmeal raisin, lemon chip, mocha chocolate chip, and molasses caramel with sea salt. At Easter time, they also feature lemon shortbread. And, while Diablo Foods carries the Meyer lemon cheesecake on a regular basis, several additional flavors are available by special order: S'more, Dulce de Leche, both on graham cracker crust, Creamsicle on vanilla wafer crust, White Chocolate Strawberry and Jamocha Almond Fudge, otherwise known as "For the Love of Pete," in honor of her husband!

Johnson keeps it local by baking her cookies at Back To The Table production kitchen in Lafayette, and hopes to one day be the official cookie of the San Francisco Giants and 49ers club houses. But, she doesn't want to be just a cookie company. She wants to leave a little mark that will mean something extra. She'd like to start a foundation for special needs kids, by donating a percentage of her proceeds to help these kids and their families.

It appears she is on the right track to being able to do just that.

"I'd like to thank my customers for their support and Connie and Ray of Diablo Foods for taking a chance on me," Johnson mentioned. "I love to bake for all of you, and I hope one day my son will take over the business. I want to be one of those businesses that can look back and say, 'In business for 40 years!'"

Cookies, Please

Phone: (510) 435-4890 Email: cookiesplease2011@yahoo.com Facebook page Cookies, Please Cookies Please is available at Diablo Foods and at the Kaiser, Walnut Creek and Danville Farmers' Markets on Tuesdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and spring/summer Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., respectively.

Elsie's Lemon Bars

Crust

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 cubes unsalted sweet cream butter, cut into small pieces

Mix all in a large bowl until crumbly, using clean, cool fingertips or a pastry cutter to work butter into flour/sugar mixture. Pat into a greased 9x13 oblong pan. Bake at 300 degrees for 18-25 minutes, or until crust is lightly golden. Cool.

Filling

- 6 eggs, room temperature and slightly beaten
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice (from Meyer lemons when in season)
- Zest of 2 lemons

Mix eggs and sugar until well combined. Fold in flour and baking powder and mix well. Stir in lemon juice and zest. Pour over the cooled crust and bake at 300 degrees until set, about 25 minutes. Cool.

Before serving, dust the top of the cooled bars with powdered sugar and fresh lemon zest.

Susie Iventosch is the author of Tax Bites and Tasty Morsels, which can be found at Across the Way in Moraga, www.amazon.com, and www.taxbites.net. Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com.

This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.



Hyper-realistic Photographer Captures Vibrancy of Nature

... continued from page B5



Rainbow, Honopu Trail, Kauai, 2012



Photos Dave Dondero Valley Oaks on Cliff, Shell Ridge, CA, 2012

Dondero has appropriated HDR imaging to his own imaginative ends. He refers to his process as his "special sauce." By digitally collating multiple exposures, he is able to blend rich textural detail with layers of vibrant color. The effect is almost fantastical. The photographs feel like they belong in storybook.

Each image becomes ever so slightly fictionalized despite its hyper-realistic origin, as though its carbon copy were rendered with pastels. Dondero's photographs therefore have a distinctly painterly quality.

Dondero considers himself series-oriented. He chooses a the-

matic subject and explores it in depth through his lens. In addition to landscapes, he photographs church interiors, seaplanes, and the Italian coast, where he and his wife often travel to visit family. Similar to Yosemite, Italy is more than a beautiful getaway for Dondero: it's an opportunity to work.

Business Service Directory

Gardening

J. Limon Gardening

Maintenance/Clean-up
Monthly Service
Sprinkler System Repair

Call Jose
(925) 787-5743

License #: 018287
25 yrs. experience in Lamorinda

Underpinning

Bay Area
UNDERPINNING
GENERAL CONTRACTOR LIC. 967103
BUILDING FOUNDATIONS • LIFTING
LEVELING • STABILIZING
707 310-0602
www.bayareaunderpinning.org

Construction

ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION

FREE ESTIMATE

- 2nd Floor & Room Additions
- Foundation / Retaining Wall & Concrete Drive Way Repairs
- Design / Permit & Build Services

925.253.1000

Safe Engineering Construction.Com

Recycle

please...

NEWSPAPER

...thanks

Heating

ATLAS

HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING COMPANY
CA LIC. #489501

Old-fashioned service and high-quality installations.

925-944-1122

www.atlasheating.com
Since 1908

Construction

KITCHENS
CABINET REFACING
BATHROOMS
ROOM ADDITIONS
ALL TYPES OF REMODELING

CALL FOR A FREE IN-HOME ESTIMATE
925-560-1020

SERVING YOUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1990

CORRAL

CONSTRUCTION, CO.
Bonded & Insured License #586127
www.corral-construction.com