

FOOD EDITOR: Janet Rausa Fuller
foodnews@suntimes.com

To send letters or news:
Food, Chicago Sun-Times
350 N. Orleans St., Chicago 60654
Phone: (312) 321-2586 | Food News: (312) 321-3139
Fax: (312) 321-2566 | Advertising: (312) 321-2470

BITS & BITES

Doughnuts with an edge

BITE CAFE | It's been a winding, unusual road for creator of gourmet eco-friendly goodness

BY MICHAEL NAGRANT

Kirsten Anderson shatters the ideal of the quintessential doughnut baker, embodied by the pudgy, pajama-wearing Fred the Baker in those mid-'80s Dunkin Donuts commercials.

While Anderson, 28, plies her trade before dawn in the hazy golden kitchen light of an otherwise ghostly dark Bite Cafe, where she has waited tables since 2001, an early rise is where the similarities end.

Anderson, who creates gourmet-flavored doughnuts by hand for her Glazed Donuts Catering operation, has made a living defying expectations.

She has worked in the food industry for more than 13 years, starting out illegally bartending at 15 ("I didn't even know what gin was, but I was making gin and tonics," she says). She also has been a legal document process server, private investigator, food writer and personal bodyguard.

While at Bite, Anderson trained at the American Fighting Academy on North Halsted. She secured a job as a bodyguard for a charismatic religious teen minister who sold out stadiums.

"Eventually I realized I was going to have to sleep a lot less and drink a lot more if I stayed in this job," she says.

In her next job, as a process server, she surprised people with court documents or sneaked into the hideouts of domestic abuse scofflaws to make sure they weren't leaving the country before trial.

When living out of her car 10 hours a day grew tiresome, Anderson took up journalism at Columbia College in Chicago, eventually graduating and landing free-lance gigs. But, she says, "The more I wrote about people and chefs who were doing new and interesting stuff, the more I wanted to be the person doing the new and interesting stuff."

In the midst of brainstorming food ideas, she took a girlfriend to Hot Chocolate in Wicker Park for a birthday dessert of brioche doughnuts.

"It was good, and all these doughnuts were showing up on all these fine-dining menus, but they weren't nearly as cool as they could be," she says. "I thought there was so much more potential, but really I was talking out of my ... well, you know what."

Anderson took a doughnut pilgrimage to the Pacific Northwest, eating at celebrated spots like Top Pot and Mighty-O Donuts in Seattle.

She was inspired to see that people



Kirsten Anderson displays some of her doughnuts — butternut squash with sage and caramel-glazed cornmeal — at Bite Cafe, where she works. | JOHN J. KIM/SUN-TIMES



A caramel cornmeal doughnut with hazelnut comes with extra caramel for dipping.



Anderson serves Jenna Andriano (middle) one of her freshly baked treats.

built their business on a shoestring budget and felt she could do the same. And she thought she had an edge.

"Except for the doughnut guy in New York [Doughnut Plant], no one was doing the kind of flavors I was thinking," she says.

She launched her business in Janu-

ary 2008. Her very first doughnut, an orange spice concoction filled with nutmeg and clove and featuring fresh juice, was a labor of love.

"We juiced and zested forever," she says.

She moved on to Mexican chocolate, pistachio with cardamom and honey

WHERE TO BUY

Glazed Donuts Catering doughnuts (\$3 a piece) are available Friday mornings until they last at:

Bite Cafe
1039 N. Western (773-395-2483)

Green Grocer
1402 W. Grand (312-624-9508)

New Wave Coffee
3103 W. Logan/2557 N. Milwaukee (773-489-0646)

Swim Cafe
1357 W. Chicago (312-492-8600)

For larger pre-orders or catering, contact Kirsten Anderson at glazed-chicago@gmail.com.

lavender, all culminating in an alcoholic ensemble of champagne, Chambord and Irish Car Bomb on New Year's Eve.

Of her wacky flavors, only pina colada has stumped her customers.

"Everyone freaked out, but what's not to love about pineapple, coconut and rum?" she says.

Anderson uses sustainable and local ingredients whenever possible, including crispy bacon from C&D farms in Indiana for a recent batch of bacon maple doughnuts.

But flavor is paramount. "I never ever want someone to bite into one of my products and say, 'Oh, that's good for being an organic, local doughnut,'" she says.

Her cake doughnuts are hand-rolled and deep-fried six at a time in a relatively dinky commercial fryer filled with zero trans fat soy vegetable oil. She glazes them by hand in a three-hour process, yielding about seven dozen doughnuts a week.

The doughnuts — \$3 apiece — have no egg or butter, less than a teaspoon of palm oil shortening and are sweetened with evaporated cane juice. For folks used to the yeast bombs at commercial bakeries, Anderson's doughnuts are as nuanced as fine wine.

Though it seems like the itinerant Anderson has finally found her calling, even this occupation had unlikely beginnings. Her first doughnut memory was of plastic-wrapped chocolate Gems from the corner gas station.

But even in commercially baked doughnuts, you can find beauty, she says.

"Everyone has some major sense memory of doughnuts from when they were a kid," she says. "Doughnuts return the magic of your childhood and take away the disappointment of your adulthood."

Michael Nagrant is a Chicago free-lance writer.

food**411**
BY DENISE I. O'NEAL



Red Light Chef Jackie Shen and 8-year-old jewelry designer Ian Cahr.

Animal crackers

Chef Jackie Shen of Red Light, 820 W. Randolph, and 8-year-old Chicagoan Ian Cahr, who designs bracelets to raise money for animal welfare, share the love at a cooking demonstration at 11:30 a.m. Sunday; \$35. Cahr's bracelets will be available for purchase. A portion of the proceeds will benefit Friends of Animal Care and Control. (312) 733-8880.

Date night

Le Colonial, 937 N. Rush, declares Wednesdays date night and is offering a three-course menu for two that will change weekly. The \$40 menu includes a shared appetizer, two entrees and shared dessert with coffee or tea. (312) 255-0088.

Chocolate galore

Alliance Francaise de Chicago, 810 N. Dearborn, kicks off its February lineup of classes at 10 a.m. Saturday. The class will cover chocolate truffles, coeur a la creme with strawberry sauce and chocolate fondant with creme anglaise; \$85. (312) 337-1070.

Hip-hoppin' eggs

Purgatory Pizza, 3415 N. Clark, partners with Grape Juice Records for a series of music-inspired brunches kicking off 11 a.m. Sunday with guest Phillip Morris; \$13. (773) 975-6677.

outtathebox
BY DENISE I. O'NEAL



KASHI MEXICALI BLACK BEAN THIN CRUST PIZZA

★★★★

Suggested retail: \$6.29

Per 1/3 of 1 (13.6-ounce) pizza:
240 calories, 8 g fat, 590 mg sodium, 29 g carbohydrates

Kashi continues to expand its brand with winning products.

The company's new pizzas are a testament to its quest to incorporate good taste and ethnic flavors into its line of seven-grain-based products.

The Mexicali pizza sounds way too healthy to be good. Wrong.

Kashi layers red and green peppers, corn, tomatillos, fire-roasted poblano peppers, mozzarella and Cheddar cheeses and a spicy black bean sauce on a multigrain crust, replacing the toppings traditionally associated with pizza, such as tomato sauce and meat.

The pizza is like a giant tortilla chip topped with great ingredients.

The colorful vegetables dress up the crust, and the spicy seasonings liven your taste buds. And the crust is so thin you even can fold it up and eat it like a burrito.

Kashi has put another winner on the table. The pizzas and other Kashi products are available at Whole Foods, Jewel and Dominick's stores.

doneal@suntimes.com

SWAP SHOP BY SANDY THORN CLARK

Onions have layers of potential in dishes

Onions star in this week's Swap Shop recipes: French Onion Soup from Dotti Nichols, for S.S. of Chicago; miniature Onion Muffins from Ellen Hostetler of Berwyn, for K.C. of Elmhurst, and Tater-Topped Chili and Ground Beef Casserole from Rosemary McGrath of Evergreen Park, for several readers requesting economical casseroles for families.

To make McGrath's Tater-Topped Chili, which makes 6 servings: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cook 1 chopped onion in 2 tablespoons cooking oil. Add 1 pound ground beef; brown and drain. Add 3 teaspoons chili powder; ½ teaspoon salt, 1 (10-ounce) package of frozen mixed vegetables, and 1 (10½-ounce) can tomato soup. Turn into a 12-by-7-by-2-inch casserole. Spread 1 (1-pound) package of frozen french fries on top; bake for 35 minutes. Remove casserole; sprinkle 1 cup of shredded American cheese on top. Bake 10 more minutes.

For McGrath's Ground Beef Casserole, which makes 6 servings: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Brown 1 pound ground beef; drain. Mix together drained ground beef, 1 cup chopped celery, 1 small chopped onion, ½ cup to ¾ cup uncooked rice, 1 can cream of mushroom soup (undiluted), 1 can cream of chicken soup (undiluted), 1 small can bean sprouts (undrained), ¼ cup soy sauce and 1 small can sliced mushrooms. Pour into 12-by-7-by-2-inch casserole with lid. Cover; bake for 1 hour. Sprinkle a large can of chow mein noodles on top of casserole; bake, uncovered, 10 minutes longer.

ONION MUFFINS

MAKES 36 MINIATURE MUFFINS

- 1 large egg, slightly beaten
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- ¾ cup milk
- 1 cup self-rising flour
- 1 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
- ¼ cup sugar
- ½ cup Vidalia onions, chopped

- ¾ cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- ¼ cup pecans, chopped

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In large mixing bowl, whisk together egg, oil and milk; add self-rising flour, rolled oats and sugar. Stir batter just until mixture is blended. Gently add onions, shredded cheese and pecans; spoon mixture into 36 buttered and floured ⅛-cup muffin cups (miniature muffin tins).

Bake muffins in middle of preheated oven for 15 to 20 minutes or until golden brown. Turn muffins out onto racks; serve muffins warm or at room temperature.

Ellen Hostetler

Nutrition facts per muffin: 64 calories, 4 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 9 mg cholesterol, 6 g carbohydrates, 2 g protein, 63 mg sodium, 0 g fiber

Requests

I'm looking for a recipe for flavoring and coloring boiled eggs in beets and sweet-and-sour beet juice.

K.S., Arlington Heights

Do you have a recipe for crisp cookies made with white chocolate chips and macadamia nuts that are like Pepperidge Farm's Tahoe version? My kids love those!

A.C., Chicago

Please print a recipe for made-from-scratch au gratins.

T.L., Chicago

Send recipes and requests to: Swap Shop, Chicago Sun-Times, 350 N. Orleans, 9th Floor, Chicago 60654 or by e-mail, swapshop@suntimes.com.

All mail must include a daytime telephone number. Sorry, requests can't be answered personally.

