

Gayle's Bakery celebrates 30th anniversary

REGISTER-PAJARONIAN STAFF REPORT

Valentine's Day means hearts and flowers to most people. But to Gayle and Joe Ortiz, the day has a particularly sweet significance.

On Feb. 14, 1978, the couple opened their little Capitola bakery called Gayle's, which was destined to become a delectable destination for locals and visitors alike. Gayle's celebrates its 30th anniversary this Valentine's Day and has grown from a modest one-employee business to a thriving bakery and deli, famous for such favorites as princess cakes, pecan tassies and Blue Plate Dinners.

"We started with a few recipes for bread, croissants and desserts," said Gayle Ortiz.

She opened the bakery with Joe after taking an eight-week pastry class that sparked her desire to bake professionally. It was obvious Gayle had the baking bug as early as childhood: She remembers her grandmother letting her "frost" bricks with soap lather.

Gayle's has gone through many changes in the last three decades. It has grown from 800 square feet to 13,000 square feet, including a conversion of the building next door into production space. A 1983 expansion inspired by the Ortiz's travels in Italy added the Rosticceria with its wood-burning rotisserie and a variety of new food items.

In honor of its 30th anniversary, Gayle's will offer several special promotions:

- During the 30 days from Jan. 15 to Feb. 14, drawings each day will award two winners with either a 7-inch cake or two Blue Plate Dinners. Drawings will be held daily at noon at Gayle's. No purchase is necessary; one entry is allowed per person per day.

- All daily entries will be included in the grand prize drawing to be held at Gayle's on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14. The grand prize winner will receive a catered dinner for 30, a value of approximately \$1000, delivered to their home.

- Gayle's will donate 30 percent of their Jan. 30 gross sales to the Second Harvest Food Bank. Executive Director Willy Elliot-McCrea will receive the

donation check at Gayle's Feb. 14 celebration.

When Gayle's opened in 1978, the bakery offered 10 items and had only one employee, with Gayle as pastry chef and Joe making bread. Now the business has nearly 150 employees and in the past 30 years has created more than 25 million cakes, pastries and desserts.

What was once a buttery gleam in Gayle's pastry-making eye has evolved from a tiny neighborhood bakery into a successful and highly esteemed business featured in local, state and national publications.

Joe's bread-making efforts led him to a special appearance on Julia Child's PBS cooking show, "Baking With Julia." He is the author of several food-related books (his bread-making book, "The Village Baker," was nominated for the prestigious Julia Child Cookbook Award), and he also wrote and produced a full-length stage production called, appropriately enough, "Bread! — The Musical."

Thanks to their partner and general manager, Louise Beers, Joe and Gayle have been able to travel to countries such as France, Germany and Italy to learn from bakers and chefs in those countries, bringing back information and expertise to share with their employees at Gayle's.

"When we first opened, we had one employee and now we have 150," notes Gayle Ortiz. "Everyone knows it takes quality ingredients to create a good product. Businesses are like a recipe — and our employees are our most important ingredient."

Louisa Beers agrees, commenting that many of the company's key people have been with the business for 20 years or even more. "We have a solid core, a family of employees who are truly the heart of the company," said Beers.

Gayle's Bakery and Rosticceria is located at 504 Bay Ave., Capitola, and is open 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., with a few exceptions for holidays.

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For more information call 462-1200 or visit the Gayle's Web site at www.gaylesbakery.com.