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Toot Sweets Says Goodbye

By *Sophie Braccini*



Marcy Wheeler in her Lafayette bakery Photo provided

Emily Sabatte is quite distressed. For eight years now the Lafayette mom has been buying her daughters' birthday cakes at Toot Sweets in Lafayette and now that the shop is closing, she doesn't know another local bakery that would offer the same quality and creative conceptions.

The bakery has been located at 3518 Mt. Diablo Blvd. for thirteen years. "We started our first business in Berkeley when we were very young," remembers Marcy Wheeler, the bakery's owner, "our first place was The Edible Express on College Avenue, and the first Toot Sweets in Berkeley supplied the cafe on College."

"We have been customers of theirs since the Edible Express days," recalls Connie Chiba of Moraga. She used to take her toddlers there (they are now adults), "and we were so delighted when they moved to Lafayette in the 90's."

Creating cakes was always Wheeler's forte. "Marcy created a most delicious and beautiful cake for the baptism of my first daughter," remembers Sabatte, "her decoration was delicate and dainty."

Wheeler's ability to create unique decorations was one of the Sabatte's favorite features. "Marcy always added something special and for my daughters the arrival of the pink box was the real beginning of the celebration."

When Wheeler's son reached 6th grade, the family moved to Lafayette. "It was a perfect solution for me," she explains, "I worked and lived here, the kids and their friends helped at the bakery during the holidays, it was part of our identity."

Now that her children are grown, Marcy says it's time to retire from the bakery. "When you're young you feel that you can do it all," she says. But last year

she hurt her shoulder transporting heavy trays and after she underwent surgery, she realized that something had to change.

Behind her Lafayette bakery, she's been renting a studio with the Lamorinda Arts Alliance where painters meet, work, interact and also offer art classes for adults.

"I felt we needed a place to work together, not only a location to sell," says Wheeler, "and this is why this studio came to life." She adds that if she didn't have her painting, leaving the bakery would have been much harder. "Art is my number one passion and I've had to make choices," confesses Wheeler.

Wheeler and her husband have sold Toot Sweets' lease to a frozen yogurt business; she thinks that this is a hard time for high-end bakeries and it might be the right time for her to retire anyway. "People go to Safeway or Costco because it is cheaper," she acknowledges, "but by doing so they make choices that will kill the independent businesses that live in their community." She believes that a movement like "Try Lafayette First" is a great initiative to raise people's awareness about the importance of shopping locally.

Over the years, she created or modified hundreds of recipes. "I'd love to have the recipe for her pecan pie," says Chiba, "and her Boston cream cake, and her tarts which were so excellent."

Wheeler plans to create a recipe book that will be available for purchase on blurb.com. She would like her customers to send her emails indicating what recipes they are most interested in; her email address is: marcy@marcywheeler.com.

Lafayette Police Officers were regularly spotted having their morning oatmeal at Toot Sweets. Wheeler says: "I know it sounds silly, but the recipe most people have asked for lately is for our oatmeal. Sometimes it is those little 'tricks' that make the difference!"

Toot Sweets Oatmeal

Bring 2 cups water to a rolling boil. Add a pinch of salt and 1 cup Quaker Oats Old Fashioned Oatmeal.

Stir only briefly. Turn down heat to low.

Continue to cook 5 minutes, and then turn off heat and let sit for 3-5 more minutes.

Letting the water boil first and not over-agitating the cooking oatmeal helps keep the structure of the individual rolled oat. You just can't get that texture with instant, or if you beat it up with a spoon as it's cooking. Having the water already boiling before adding the oats helps set the shape. Brown sugar, raisins, cinnamon, cream...that's all up to your preference.

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