

Published May 25th, 2011

Celebrating Opening with Sourdough

By Cathy Tyson



"This is a homecoming for me," said Gary Ramirez, Store Team Leader, welcoming shoppers to the opening of Whole Foods, "I went to Lamorinda schools and got my first job at a deli in Lafayette." While thanking everyone for their patience in bringing the store to fruition he added, "it's worth the wait." Instead of a ribbon cutting there was the breaking of a gigantic loaf of sourdough bread by key Whole Foods Team Members and land owner Joan Bruzzone.

"After five plus years of rumors and speculation, it's finally here," said Jay Lifson, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce. "Good luck and congratulations to the Bruzzone family." He joked that he had some notes disguised as a grocery list, and commented on parking concerns "that can be a good problem to have," referring to an abundance of customers, "but we'll figure it out." Part of the negotiations between the store and City was providing adequate parking for shoppers and employees. To remedy the situation, Whole Foods purchased land and developed a lot on the corner of Deer Hill Road and First Street to accommodate employees, removing a sizeable number of cars from the lot directly in front of the store.

Breaking a loaf of sourdough under the eyes of the first customers Photo Doug Kohen

Ramirez introduced Harve Singh who described his job for Whole Foods - Local Forager. Over the past three and a half years, he's

been responsible for scouting out local vendors for Northern California stores. "We have a commitment to re-invigorating local purchasing, and we help scale up local producers through our Local Producer Loan Program," said Singh. Ritual Coffee Roasters of San Francisco received a check for \$50,000 and Gelateria Naia of Hercules got \$25,000 at the store opening as a low interest loan to help them grow their businesses. Singh invited anyone with local product to come to customer service desk and pitch their product.

With the store opening a week prior to the Lamorinda Weekly publication date, hopefully some of the initial curiosity will taper. But if the parking lot is any indication, the store is off to a good start.

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