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PaperBox Bread & Pastry: new addition at Moraga Farmers' Market

By Sophie Braccini



Evan Lowe in front of his farmers' market stand, PaperBox Pastry. Photo Sophie Braccini

The year-round Moraga Farmers' Market does not cease to diversify, attracting new vendors such as mushroom producers or unique grape growers (have you heard of "Thomcord" grapes?) as well as cooks, bakers and pastry chefs. One recent addition pushed the market toward the gourmet label: PaperBox Bread & Pastry, owned by Campo grad and now pastry chef Evan Lowe.

A young father who graduated from Campolindo High School in 2008, Lowe worked at Metro Lafayette while he was still in school. Erika Pringsheim-Moore gave Lowe his first job in the kitchen, encouraging him to try his hand at food preparation. After graduation and because the idea of long years studying was not appealing to him, Lowe decided to go the culinary route. He studied in Chicago, where he met his wife. The pastry chef explains that they were both trained in French pastry baking techniques, and that their creations are infused with Californian and Asian tastes.

Lowe worked at different restaurants after graduating, including the prestigious French Laundry, then decided that he wanted to try his hand at entrepreneurship and launched PaperBox Bread & Pastry last spring at the Moraga Farmers' Market.

On a typical Sunday morning the lines form quickly in front of Lowe's white tent. Some are curious newcomers attracted by the seductive but still natural looking confections and pastries on display. Many of the clients are already aficionados who became quickly addicted to the cream puffs, macarons, stuffed English muffins, chocolate chip cookies, Pates de Fruit (a centuries old French candy recipe made with fruit, no preservatives or artificial flavors), and more.

Each week the selection changes because Lowe works with the farmers' market fruit vendors. In season, he will have Meyer lemon and strawberry macarons, and peach, Thomcord grape or apple pates de fruits. He says that the vendors know each other at the market, taste each other's produce and confections, and create synergies.

In the meantime, Joao Magalhaes, a longtime Moraga resident, comes by for a weekly treat. The well-traveled man who has savored specialties all over the world and has visited the best of the Bay Area's restaurants has become appreciative of Lowe and always gets something at his booth every Sunday. The day this reporter was there, Magalhaes raided the pates de fruits.

Luckily for Teresa Onoda, Magalhaes was not interested in the chocolate chip cookies. That is what the Moraga vice mayor likes best; she added that those are the best she ever had. Lowe shares a little bit of his secret, explaining that he uses small chunks of bittersweet Guittard chocolate and adds a tiny amount of salt on top to magnify the sweetness.

If the weather is warm, Lowe's wife can be seen at the market with their young child on her lap. She explains that she works during the week for Facebook's catering, while Lowe takes care of their child and the business.

"This is what I was born to do," says Lowe.

PaperBox Bread & Pastry can be found at the Moraga Farmers' Market every Sunday between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. More pictures can be found at www.instagram.com/paperboxpastry/.

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