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Hayes Valley Bakeworks: A cafe of caring and heart

July 5, 2016

8:01 AM MST



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Baker extraordinaire Martha Martinez
Beverly Mann

Savoring a freshly baked pastry out of the oven, along with a flavorful cappuccino, can delight many a palate. However, if you knew that each morsel and sip contributed to a greater cause, the experience would be even more satisfying. This is the experience that many customers feel at [Hayes Valley Bakeworks](#), a popular café and [bakery](#) at Gough and Fulton Street in [San Francisco](#).

Four-year-old Bakeworks is the creation of [Toolworks](#), a socially conscious organization founded in 1975 that employs people with disabilities and who are at-risk or even homeless. The company provides paid on-the-job training and case management support to help stabilize living conditions and long-term employment.

According to Toolworks CEO Kristy Feck, “Our businesses provide us with revenue that makes it possible to establish the full range of social services which support the people we serve in order for them to live independently, go to college, gain work skills, and fully participate in the community.”

Toolworks has successful commercial cleaning and recycling businesses which offer employment to more than 100 individuals with disabilities. So, how did the idea of a bakery and café come into fruition?

Feck states, “We wanted a business that could be forward facing and engages the community. The bakery concept made a lot of sense because it requires lots of labor. Since Bakeworks makes everything from scratch, this requires even more opportunities for employment and training.”

It is the care and effort that goes into these recipes which create some of the most enticing, creative sweets, sandwiches, and salads. The perfectly baked and addictive banana bread, scrumptious apple and cranberry galette, and melt-in-your-mouth scones are just a few of the tasteful offerings prepared by baker extraordinaire Martha Martinez.

There are recipes to fit any diet. Vegans can enjoy the morning glory muffins and Mexican hot chocolate snicker doodles. Need gluten free eatables? Try the cocoa nib cookie or the dark chocolate almond cookie.

On the wall hangs a certificate of recognition presented by Senator Mark Leno, which says it all. Leno states, “I commend your efforts to provide individuals with skills needed to become self-sufficient and financially independent. It’s through the caring and creative efforts of organizations such as yours that the world becomes a brighter place for all.”

The words straight from the mouth of a trainee further verifies the effectiveness of Bakeworks. “I never knew that I could have a job and be successful or see such a big improvement to my standard of living.”

Will the company be opening similar cafés and bakeries in the near future? Bakeworks Manager Mark Bailey states, “We invite suggestions on other appropriate locations that would serve the community with this particular brand of bakery.”

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