

Baking, Family and Quality

A framed collage kept in the back of the bakery shows the early days at Frank's Bake Shop. This was before the shop was renovated. Joseph Soucy (left) rings up a customer with his daughter Bernadette. Workers have always been diligent and strive for quality foods. Today, the donuts are still second to none when they come out freshly baked in the morning.



By: Maria Sutryn

Franks Bake Shop in Bangor, Maine has had a thriving business for 68 years. They have held true to the quality of being a “from scratch” bakery. They bake everything with fresh products, without any mixes or additives.

Before the bakery opened, Frank Soucy, who was named after the bakery, used to be the head baker at the University of Maine. His son Frank Jr. was making food for Dow Air Force Base and his other son, Joseph Soucy, was sorting mail on the railway. Frank Sr. brought up the idea for the three of them to start a bakery together and so they did, with just \$200 between the three of them. Frank and his two sons founded the bakery in 1945. Frank Jr. was 19 years old when the business started. It was first located on Hancock Street. They then relocated to State Street to what previously was an A&P store. Frank Soucy had worked as a bag boy there when he was growing up. The man who owned the grocery store was a wealthy man who always had to have his suits tailored. One day he told a sailor that he would sell the place in a heartbeat.

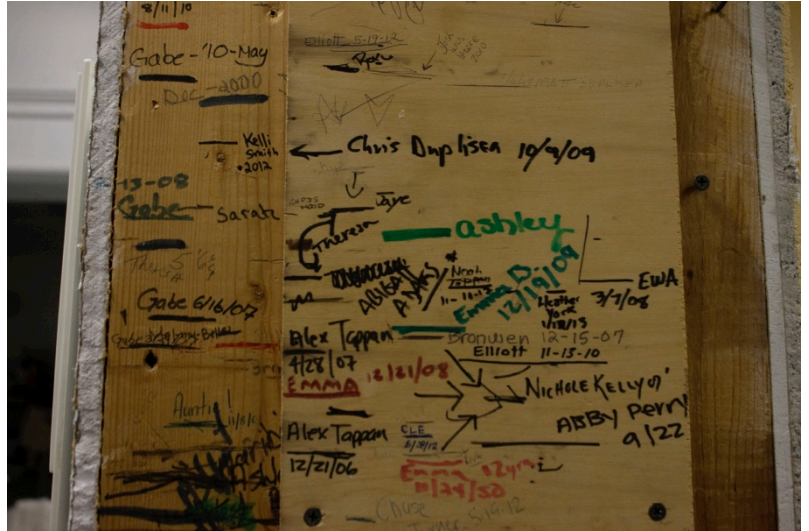
The many damages and issues of the business annoyed him, so he decided to sell it. He regretted it, but once he had signed the contract he couldn't back out. When Frank Sr. heard about it, the new location of the bakery was opened in 1947 where it resides today. Frank taught his sons everything he knew and the family continued to pass on his skills and techniques to new workers.

The bake shop started catering in the early 50's, which really helped the business. They also started making the first pizzas around town in the late 50's- early 60's. In the 90s, Frank Jr. sold his share of the business to Joe and continued to work as a baker.

Now the bakery, which has 36 employees, is owned by Joe's five children: Theresa Soucy, Bernadette Gaspar, Joseph Soucy, Richard Soucy and Fleurette Dow. Growing up, it was great for them because they all had a job. They didn't have to go out looking for one. When Bernadette was a kid the bakery would cater 3-4 weddings on a weekend.

Over the years the Soucy's decided to expand their menu to include deli sandwiches, homemade meals and gluten-free options. During the summer when fresh raspberries are in season, Bernadette "Queen of Tarts" makes her famous raspberry tarts. They go very fast, as the bakery sells about 6 thousand tarts. Call ahead if you want them!

The busiest times are around Thanksgiving and before Christmas. For thanksgiving they make over a thousand pies and bake about eight hundred dozen rolls. Thanksgiving is the craziest. They also make specialty meals for people who are dairy free. For Christmas, mainly they're making dozens and dozens of cookies.



Workers have marked their height on the doorway for 10 years. As new workers join the bakery, they add their name and everyone is connected. Even if they're not all related, they form a family.



Jason George and Kevin McLellan making blueberry-raspberry cupcakes. Kevin learned all the baking secrets under Frank Jr. Soucy. Kevin has taught his now close friend, Jason. They always have a good time at work and they both had come from working at restaurants, but baking is what they love.

The bakery has a good relationship around town with the banks, hospitals, and nursing homes. They do a lot of deliveries and set-ups for weddings. There's a list of items they keep track of to give to soup kitchens. They receive several donation requests from customers for great causes, especially around Christmas.

There's a strong bond between the workers. Sierra McLellan, Kevin's daughter, is pregnant and will be welcoming a little boy named Shayne. They all dedicated a cake to her and her son with the words: 'Welcome Shayne. Congratulations. From your Frank's family.'

The bakery receives thank you emails and letters on a monthly basis. A regular customer at Frank's Bake Shop, Cinda Lacadie, wrote to the bakery this November saying, "I have to congratulate you and your staff on your wonderful customer service. I

tend to visit you on my day off and hope to find a honey bun in your case, if not I choose either your donuts or scones. Anyways, every single time I come in your staff are always friendly and are with a smile. Kudos to your training and expectations that excellent customer service is a norm!"



Ermie (left), an occasional worker at Frank's that mainly works at Aquapura, the health and wellness store next door, which the Soucy's also own, is laughing with Julie Bennett (right) at a funny card one of the workers gave to them. Julie has worked at the bakery for 15 years and you can always catch her laughing. She's a joy to be around.



Susan Overlock is one of the cake and cookie decorators that works in the front of the bakery. She has been an employee for about 16 years and is very talented. She is making a cake for an eleven-year-old boy for his birthday. The cake had to be vegan and look like a planet. The ingredients are listed on all the items at the bakery.

The treats the bakery makes mean so much to the customers. During the summer the bakery makes lobster shaped cookies and one of the cake and cookie decorators, Jade Bennett, recalled the time a three-year old boy came into the shop and requested more frosting on his lobster cookie. Smiling, Jade put more frosting on the cookie for him and when she gave it to him, he was overjoyed and gave her a big hug. A young girl came in to the shop this December hoping to get date-filled sugar cookies, but they were all taken. Paul McCann had been making the cookies that day and stated how nice it was that the girl patiently waited for more to be made because she loved those cookies so much. Even grownups give hugs to the staff for making them cupcakes.



Jade Bennett made a birthday cake for a boy named Alden, using lemon yellow and holiday green frosting for an allergy he had to red dye. Jade has worked at the bakery for 4 years and got the talent from her grandmother.



To celebrate the Christmas season, the bakery makes Yule log desserts. It's a chocolate sponge cake made wrapped in a chocolate roll. It's much easier to roll than a traditional cake.



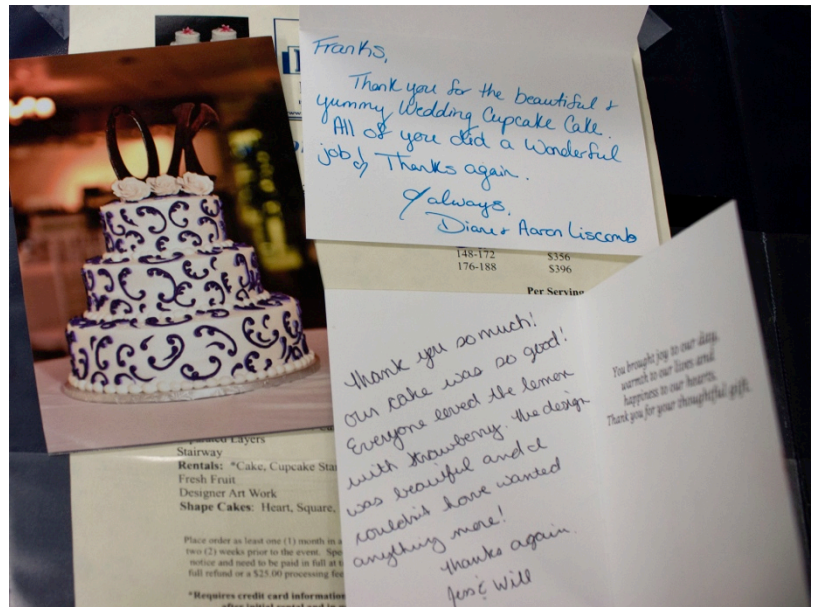
A customer arrived to see if her cake was ready and was blown away when she looked at it. She gasped, saying, "It's beautiful!" Susan Overlock made the congratulatory cake and was very pleased that the customer and her husband were so thankful.



A customer in high spirits picking up her cake as Susan makes her laugh. The lady was smiling as soon as she set foot into the bakery.

Customers who come in usually ask if many of the employees are related because they're so cheery and energetic every day. Going into the shop, the customers are very happy and smile at everyone. "The people are so good to you and it's so clean. I love it. I love coming here," said a frequent customer named Jackie McCarthy who lives right down the street from the bakery.

People appreciate home cooking and they appreciate being treated with respect. That's what does it for the customers. Some people will come in and just chitchat. Sometimes customers will come in and see someone they haven't seen in years and it's like a reunion. They're not always looking to buy something. They want to include the bakery staff in their day. It feels like a family and that's what makes it special for the workers going to work each day.



Many who got wedding cakes through Frank's bake shop take pictures of their cake on their big day and send letters of appreciation to the bakery. The bakery keeps them all for encouragement.



Bobby and Jim are regular customers at Frank's getting a cup of coffee during the Christmas season. Frank Soucy owned Frank's Bake Shop, where he is seen with his wife in this painting. He will forever be remembered for the reason the bakery is how it is today. He would always say, "You always treat your customers the way you like to be treated. Never place any product out to sell if you wouldn't want to buy it yourself. Quality comes first."