

Sweet Success

A Mountain Brook couple share their work with one another and the community.

BY CHRISTIANA ROUSSEL
PHOTOS BY STEPHEN DEVRIES

I RECENTLY HEARD A MAN JOKE, “My parents have been married for 40 years, but they also work together so my dad says it feels more like 80 years!” True, choosing to work with your spouse can make you feel like a prisoner or the luckiest person on Earth. For Ralph and Jennifer Yarbrough of Crestline Bagel, that means near-daily reasons to pinch themselves. Married since 2002, Jennifer bought the Mountain Brook-based bakery in 2007 and, with Ralph working by her side, these two have found that sweet spot in life.

“When (Jennifer) bought Crestline Bagel, the name was very descriptive of what we did,” Ralph says. “Now it’s just kind of ironic—because

it’s not so much about just the bagel or any one thing. It’s about the process. One of our corporate values is that we do not compromise on the process or the ingredients.”

People might be surprised to learn that Crestline Bagel sells more than just bagels. The couple and their staff produce cream cheeses, salads, pastries, granolas and cookies from scratch in their Homewood commercial kitchen. They make all of their breads at the Church Street storefront. In addition to bagels,

they make bread for several Birmingham-based entities including Children’s of Alabama, Trattoria Centrale and Todd English P.U.B.

“It has been really fun making custom breads for restaurants and it’s something we’d like to pursue further,” Jennifer says. “It’s really rewarding because you are tailoring something to a specific need, for chefs who know what to do with it. It’s also a good creative outlet for our bakers.”

Some of the shop’s rotating lineup of artisanal breads are available for purchase around town. The company has expanded its storefront to include catering and wholesale; Crestline Bagel products are now available at Whole Foods Market, four area Piggly Wiggly stores, two Western Supermarkets, Winn-Dixie and Freshfully. “With everything we do, we want to start small and become really good at it, then scale it and make it bigger,” Ralph says.

“We want people, when they hear Crestline Bagel, to not just think of bagels but we want them to think that whatever it is we make, it’s the best you’ll have.” ■



In recent years, Crestline Bagel has grown to include full breakfast and lunch menus and baked goods while retaining a focus on the namesake bagel.



Ralph and Jennifer Yarbrough





French Toast Casserole

The Yarbroughs offer this treat as part of their catering menu and also enjoy it at home with their two boys, Houston and Yates.

Makes 12 servings

1/2 braided loaf of Crestline Bagel Co.
 Amazing Challah Bread, sliced 1 1/2" thick or cubed
 8 eggs, lightly beaten
 3 cups whole milk
 3 Tbsp. sugar
 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
 1 tsp. cinnamon
 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
 1/2 tsp. salt

Topping:

2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
 Pure maple syrup
 Powdered sugar
 Freshly cut fruit (berries, bananas, etc.)

- 1.** Place bread slices layered in a greased 13"x9" baking dish. In a large bowl, whisk eggs, milk, sugar, vanilla, salt, nutmeg and cinnamon until mixed well. Pour over bread until the liquid comes within a half inch from the top of the dish. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour or up to 8.
- 2.** Remove from refrigerator 30 minutes before baking and dot with butter.
- 3.** Cover and bake at 350° for 35 minutes. Uncover and bake 10-15 minutes longer until the top is golden and a knife inserted near the center comes out clean.
- 4.** Let stand for 5 minutes. Drizzle with maple syrup and sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve with fruit.

Details

Crestline Bagel
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