

Crestline Bagel: Inside the Doughy & Delicious Birmingham Bagel Bakery

Sixteen years ago, Jennifer and Ralph Yarbrough would stroll down to their local bagel shop with their Rhodesian Ridgeback, Ace. Jennifer would order Ace his favorite cheese bagel, and as they enjoyed their morning, Jennifer's imagination would wander. Like any true creative, Jennifer saw the bagel shop not for what it was but for what it could become. Back then, it was a simple business model. It was your ordinary bagel and cream cheese joint — and luckily for Ace, there were cheese bagels, too.

Ralph could see Jennifer's vision and decided to do something about it. He approached the owner, but the bagel shop was not for sale. Not one to be deterred, Ralph called the owner once a year. Each year, the answer was no. On the fifth year, the answer changed. Finally, it was a yes.



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After five years of inquiring to buy, the Yarbroughs finally received the “yes” they were hoping for!

Image: [Stephen DeVries](#)

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You can find [Crestline Bagel Co.](#)'s flagship bakery in the heart of Mountain Brook's Crestline Village, while its newest location (pictured here) is in Cahaba Heights.

The year Jennifer turned 30, Ralph turned 40 and their son Houston turned 1, they were in business — the bagel business. Like any savvy entrepreneur embarking on building her dream, Jennifer's excitement was mixed with apprehension. While she'd finally have an opportunity to create her vision, she said that she would also be taking on this big project while raising her young son, a challenge for any mom.

For the first three years, Jennifer molded the bagel shop to fit her vision, elevating the bagel and cream cheese options and expanding the made-from-scratch menu to include deli salads, bakery items, biscuits, focaccia and more. Like a true bagel connoisseur, Jennifer waxes rhapsodic about a sesame bagel fresh out of the oven or a classic everything bagel from the bakery case. That is what makes Jennifer a successful bagel-shop entrepreneur — the slightest details, temperature and texture make a difference to her.

“Our most popular bagel is the everything bagel — ‘ET’ for short. We also have a wheat version and a jalapeño ET in the summer,” says Jennifer, noting that the sweet onion is a close second. “The sweet onion bagel is featured on one of our sandwiches as well: the Stacked Ham, which is loaded with Boar’s Head Black Forest ham, Vermont cheddar, lettuce, tomato and honey mustard sauce.”

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ST-
 BAGEL \$1.19
 CHEESE \$3.50
 SE \$6.99
 JELLY \$1.69
 RAP \$5.75
 BUTTER \$3.50

HAM & CHEESE CROISSANT \$4.75
 BAGEL WITH MEAT \$3.50
 SAUSAGE & CHEDDAR BISCUIT \$3.25

-PANINIS-

-ROAST & GRUYERE
 ROAST BEEF, GRUYERE, ROASTED RED PEPPERS, ONIONS ON FOCACCIA BREAD

-3 CHEESE & TOMATO

-CROQUE-MONSIEUR
 BLACK FOREST HAM, GRUYERE, SPICY MUSTARD. ADD EGG FOR BREAKFAST!

-PESTO CHICKEN
 GRILLED CHICKEN, GOAT CHEESE, PESTO SAUCE, ROASTED RED PEPPERS

\$6.99

KIDS SERVED WITH FRUIT

GRILLED CHEESE
 PB&J
 TURKEY & CHEESE

PIZZA BAGEL

- CHEESE \$4.50
- PEPPERONI \$4
- PRIMAVERA \$5

OPEN FACE CHEESE



Whole Wheat



Cinnamon Raisin



POWER



Blueberry



Sesame



E.T.



Sweet Onion



Salt



Whole Wheat E.T.

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What makes Jennifer a successful bagel-shop entrepreneur? Even the slightest changes in detail, temperature and texture make a difference to her. Image: [Stephen DeVries](#)



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The famous ET bagel served with Nova lox and cream cheese.

Pretty soon, Crestline Bagel was making thousands of bagels in the bakery and feeding hundreds of people in catering daily. As any local knows, one should be prepared to stand in a long line stretching out the door for one of their freshly made bagels on a Saturday morning.

As the business grew, so did its reputation. Stores like Whole Foods came calling. They asked if Crestline Bagel would consider changing their recipes in order to meet Whole Foods' sales standards. Soon, Whole Foods was selling Crestline Bagel and other stores would soon follow.

Around this time, Ralph joined Jennifer in running the business full-time.

“Our catering grew so much that we created a separate full-service catering company with a made-from-scratch menu — [Crestline Catering Co.](#),” says Jennifer, who is quick to credit the Crestline Bagel family for the company’s success. “I believe it is a combination of our passion for what we do and our amazing employees. Crestline Bagel’s success takes a team of talented staff members, bakers, chefs and managers!” And the Yarbrough’s sons Houston and Yates, now 11 and 8, literally grew up in the neighborhood bagel shop, where the long line of loyal customers also became family friends.

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Like a true bagel connoisseur, Jennifer waxes rhapsodic about a sesame bagel fresh out of the oven or a classic everything bagel from the bakery case. Image: [Stephen DeVries](#)



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Locals know that Crestline Bagel Co. has some of the best bagels in town (and a worthwhile wait on Saturdays!) Image: [Stephen DeVries](#)

Ralph refers to Crestline Bagel as the “Cheers” of breakfast joints. “There is someone who fits all of the characters on the show, plus so many unique personalities,” he says. “We feel incredibly fortunate to call them clients and friends.”

In November, it will have been 11 years since Jennifer and Ralph acquired Crestline Bagel. However, a new adventure for the Yarbroughs has just begun. “We will be one of the caterers for the new [Leaf & Petal](#) greenhouse venue next door to our new Crestline Bagel Co. location in Cahaba Heights,” she says. “The other catering option will be [El Zun Zun](#), owned by [Becky Satterfield](#) [of [Satterfield’s](#)] and opening June 2018.”

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Jennifer’s favorite time of year is when Billy Angell of [Oak Street Garden Shop](#) — just around the corner from the flagship Crestline Bagel location — begins setting up the Christmas trees. She describes the smell of pine intermingling with freshly baked bread in the crisp holiday air. For Jennifer, the combination is magic. Not only did she grow up on a farm and still considers herself a farm girl at heart, but she and Ralph draw great

inspiration from [Petersham Nurseries in London](#), where the couple's perfect day is spent wandering through greenery, sipping coffee and noshing on a baked good. "There is something that soothes the soul about a day like that," Jennifer says. So, to join with Becky Satterfield's new eatery and Leaf & Petal Greenhouse venue felt like a natural step for Jennifer.



Jennifer and Ralph draw great inspiration from [Petersham Nurseries in London](#), where the couple's perfect day is spent wandering through greenery, sipping coffee and noshing on a baked good. "There is something that soothes the soul about a day like that," Jennifer says. Image: [Art Meripol](#)

There are those who own a business and those who live and breathe their business — Jennifer and Ralph live and breathe Crestline Bagel. Jennifer's vision coupled with Ralph's support, patience and determination brought this dream to life. So now, when you visit the new location in Cahaba Heights, sip your coffee, enjoy your baked good and wander through the greenery. It is meant to be an experience, after all.

[Crestline Bagel Co.](#)'s original bakery and shop is located on 66 Church St., B, Mountain Brook, AL 35213, and their new Cahaba Heights location is located at 4117 Crosshaven Drive, Vestavia Hills, Alabama 35243. Their hours are Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. To learn more, call the Mountain Brook shop at (205) 871-4583 or the Cahaba Heights shop at (205) 407-4583, and to inquire about catering, call (205) 82-CATER. For more information, visit [crestlinebagel.com](#).

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