

VEGETARIAN SALAD \$8.75
GREENS, VT SMOKE & CURE HAM, CARROT CHEDDAR, NORTH COUNTRY GARDENHOUSE TURKEY, TOMATOES, CUCUMBERS, PEPPERS, ONIONS, WALNUT VINAIGRETTE.

VERMONT TOFU SALAD \$8.75
GREENS, VERMONT SOY CO. MAPLE-GINGER TOFU, MIXED VEGGIES & CRANBERRIES, SESAME DRESSING

SOUP SERVED WITH BREAD
CUP \$3.95 BOWL \$5.25

SOUP COMBO \$7.25
CUP OF SOUP + 1/2 ANY SALAD
CUP OF SOUP + 1/2 SANDWICH
1/2 ANY REGULAR MENU SANDWICH OR WHOLE GRILLED CHEESE = PB+J.

VEGETARIAN BAGUETTE 7.75
VERMONT SMOKE & CURE BACON, FRESH TOMATO + LETTUCE WITH HERB MAYO ON BAGUETTE

CURRIED CHICKEN or TOFU SALAD \$8.95
ALL-NATURAL CHICKEN, BAKED IN-HOUSE & TOSSED WITH CRANBERRIES IN OUR HONEY-CURRY DRESSING, ON A BAGUETTE WITH LETTUCE. OR SALAD, BUT WITH VT SOY MAPLE-GINGER TOFU.

SALMON SALAD SANDWICH \$8.75
OVEN-ROASTED ATLANTIC SALMON IN A LIGHT LEMON-MAYO DRESSING, WITH CUCUMBERS & TOMATO ON 7 GRAIN BREAD.

VEGGIE + CHEESE \$7.50
CARROT CHEDDAR, TOMATOES, CUCUMBERS, CARROTS, LETTUCE, PEPPERS & ONIONS ON 7 GRAIN WITH HERB MAYO

PANINI OF THE DAY \$8.50
ASK ABOUT TODAY'S SELECTION!

PB+J 7 GRAIN \$5.55 **GRILLED CHEESE** \$5.55

LUNCH SERVED FROM 11 AM - 4

SANDWICHES
• EGG + CHEESE
• w/ BACON, VERMONT IN
• CHILPOTLE CHICKEN
black bean salsa, jalapeno cheddar
• VEGGIE BREAKFAST
sprouts + tomatoes
• SALMON & CHEESE
Atlantic Salmon, Red Onion & Tomato

BREAKFAST

DRINKS
DRIP COFFEE
FAIR-TRADE ORGANIC, LOCAL
ICED COFFEE
ICED TEA \$1.00
CHAI LATTE \$3.00
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BY SARAH ZOBEL
PHOTOS BY PAUL O. BOISVERT

AUGUST FIRST

NO SHORTCUTS TO DELICIOUS



Even before reaching its fifth anniversary—a milestone that will happen this summer—August First Bakery and Café is something of a Burlington institution. “When we first opened, people would say to us, ‘It feels like it’s been here forever,’” says Jodi Whalen of the “love child” she co-owns with her husband Phil Merrick. “Now we feel like part of the fabric of Burlington.” Merrick’s background in artisan bread baking and Whalen’s experience in restaurant kitchens coupled naturally to create August First, where customers return time and again for substantial sandwiches, soups made from scratch, hearty salads, and sweet pastries that are baked fresh daily. ▶

Owner Jodi Whalen gets ready for another busy day at the bakery.



From top: Pastries are displayed on an upcycled wood rack made by owner Phil Merrick. Raspberry Sour Cream muffins. Racks of freshly baked organic bread. Opposite, top and bottom: Local customers and travelers alike are attracted by the bright, cheery bakery. Center: Owners Phil and Jodi.



Quintessential Vermont

“Our vision was for it to be an extension of our home,” says Whalen, adding that employees are instructed to treat customers like visiting friends. There are eight staffers on site each day, with the earliest arriving at 4 in the morning to get the bread into the armoire-sized Italian oven—“It’s an imitation brick oven,” says Merrick, “but a little more efficient”—and all are full-time employees because, says Whalen, “Quality of life for the staff is very important to us.” They keep busy making just about everything from scratch: soups, salad dressings, tofu marinades, jams, and of course the baked goods.

“There are a lot of shortcuts we could take, but we don’t,” says Whalen. That’s part of the couple’s goal to make August First the “quintessential Vermont country bakery.” In a space that was once an auto-body repair shop and a tire store before housing the nonprofit Turning Point Center, with two massive glass garage doors a reminder of the building’s past, creating *cozy* might have been a challenge. But the interior has plenty of tables and chairs, a few gingham tablecloths, a full bookshelf for customer perusal, maple counters, and the bakers in plain view; it’s a space where people come to relax.

A Signature Pastry and More

The location at the corner of Main and South Champlain Streets is sometimes given the “off the beaten path” descriptor, but as Whalen notes, they’re only three blocks from Church Street and one block from the lake. They host plenty of repeat customers from Montreal, as well as locals who work in the area, once a lunch desert. They come for items like the top-selling sandwich, the BLT served on a baguette—with plenty of bacon—with an herb mayonnaise that’s made in-house with fresh thyme and rosemary. The turkey sandwich features Vermont Smoke and Cure meat topped with a home-made honey-curry dressing. The menu hasn’t changed much in five years, but Merrick and Whalen are toying with adding a few new offerings that they’ll test as specials first.

One item that’s guaranteed a place on the menu is their signature pastry, the Hungarian Roll, a flaky, multilayered crescent sprinkled

with powdered sugar. It evolved because Whalen wanted to offer something that was reminiscent of a croissant. A collector of vintage cookbooks, she found a recipe for Hungarian Rolls that she tweaked; since then, it's been available daily with walnut-meringue, raspberry, and apricot fillings. Every February a raspberry-flavored roll is added as part of the Valentine's Day-centered Raspberry Week, which last year featured chocolate raspberry whoopie pies, raspberry crumb muffins, and white chocolate raspberry brownies. Scones—available in a rotating lineup of cranberry almond, lemon ginger, and chocolate hazelnut—are routine bakery bestsellers, as is “old faithful,” the chocolate chip cookie (theirs includes walnuts). In general, Merrick and Whalen have shied away from food trends such as olive oil cupcakes and anything with salted caramel, while continuing to create pastries and entrées that are uniquely theirs.

The Science in the Dough

“We’re on trend without being trendy,” says Merrick. But in some ways, August First is ahead of trend, particularly when it comes to bread baking. After studying the basics with an artisan baker in southern California in the 1990s, Merrick opened a bakery and coffee shop in upstate New York, where he and his son built a 20-ton bread oven. Working as a team, they’d fire the oven while they made the bread dough, let the oven cool overnight while the dough rose, and bake the bread in the morning—around 4:30. The longer fermentation period resulted in chemical changes in the bread that gave it a distinctive flavor. The science behind this approach, which Merrick brought with him to August First, is that wheat sprouts at a lower temperature than yeast, but when standard bakeries toss in sugar and lots of yeast with their flour to “blow it up” quickly into a loaf, the benefits of the sprouting process are lost. At that point, he says, “You’re just eating raw starch and proteins,” a factor in gluten intolerance.

The August First doughs, however, use very little yeast. Unlike other bakeries’ breads, which call for two and one-fourth teaspoons per loaf, Merrick and his staff use about one teaspoon of yeast for every five pounds of flour. The dough rests at a cooler tempera-



“OUR VISION WAS FOR IT TO BE AN EXTENSION OF OUR HOME,” SAYS WHALEN, ADDING THAT EMPLOYEES ARE INSTRUCTED TO TREAT CUSTOMERS LIKE VISITING FRIENDS.



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ture—no higher than the low 60s—which allows the wheat growth to stay ahead of the yeast. The result? A more easily digestible loaf that is full of flavor.

The bread options always include sourdough, seven grain, whole wheat, Kalamata olive, and jalapeño cheddar in addition to the baguettes; they're used on-site in sandwiches but are also available for purchase and at City Market, where the August First bread bike travels every day, regardless of weather.

More recently, Merrick and Whalen have begun opening the bakery Monday through Saturday nights for private parties—corporate groups, rehearsal dinners, 50th birthdays—to enjoy unlimited amounts of 12 kinds of



August First Bakery & Café
149 S. Champlain Street
Burlington, VT
(802) 540-0060
www.augustfirstvt.com



The original brick building, almost 100 years old, contributes to the unique character of the bakery. Jodi and Tom start early in the morning to prepare the day's offerings.

flatbread pizza in combinations including sweet potato, apple, walnut, blue cheese, and caramelized onion or bacon, jalapeño, and mozzarella along with wine and local beer. In addition, they provide loaves to Burlington Wine Shop for tastings, slider and lobster rolls to caterers for summer weddings, and hamburger buns to the dealer.com café. Until November, they also owned Stacks Sandwiches; though they still provide it with hoagie rolls, they sold it, says Whalen, "when we realized that our hearts are right here." ❁



Recipe

Find Jodi's recipe for Raspberry Sour Cream Muffins online at www.bestofburlingtonvt.com.



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