



ANDREA MYERS PHOTOS, STAR-HERALD

Mark Ferrari and Mike Peva prepare fresh Kona coffee at the local Oshkosh coffee shop.

Three hour cinnamon ROLL



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Would you drive three hours for a cinnamon roll? If you'd tasted the rolls from Mark Ferrari Coffee in Oshkosh, Nebraska, you would. Light, pillowy, sticky and delicious, these pastries are definitely worth the drive.

Situated on the corner of First Street and Avenue C, just one block off Main Street, this unassuming white building holds the secret to premium Kona coffee and, if you get there in time, Sweet Macs.

A Sweet Mac is a macadamia nut cinnamon roll with a delightful frosting and chopped nuts on top made from Mark Ferrari's grandmother's recipe. Ferrari's family lives at cloud line on one

of the mountains of Kona Island, Hawaii. The climate there provides the perfect environment for their coffee farm. Surrounding the "guardians of Kona coffee" the macadamia trees provide shade for the coffee plants as well as one of the secret ingredients for the well protected secret recipe.

Over 20,000 Sweet Macs have been sold since they were first introduced about three years ago and they sell out daily. In fact, they have a bit of a cult following. Mike Peva, a partner in the business and the hands-on baker, shared that they have a Colorado travel group who will fly up to the Oshkosh airport and come get coffee and a pan of rolls and then fly back down south.

"We recommend people order them online so they're available when you need them." They're

open to receive orders until 2 p.m. for the next day pickup at markferrarioffee.com.

While the rolls are delicious, they are only a tiny portion of the business. "We are a coffee roaster first." Mark started roasting coffee thirty-five years ago in Kona. "I had a sensei that taught me and imparted a passion for coffee."

He grins with a far away look in his eyes and starts to tell the story of Marian, the coffee roasting widow that lived down the street from his family's farm. She was known as the number one coffee roaster in the Kona coffee co-op.

Marian was a woman of few words who, when she hired him, simply said, "Be here at 6." She employed the "old-school method of coffee roasting focusing on smell, sound and the

A tray of Sweet Macs on display at Ferrari Coffee in Oshkosh, Nebraska.

roast profile." Strict with her rules, Marian corrected Mark sternly if he ever stepped on a coffee bean because it was "disrespectful to everyone involved, the farmer, the harvesters, everyone." One time, Mark was late to work and Marian locked him out. "I was never late again." She eventually warmed up and became Mark's honorary grandmother and was part of his family until she passed at 97 years old.

Hawaii produces about 5 million pounds of green coffee per year and contributes about \$44 million to the Hawaiian economy,

Ferrari

From H1

according to the Kona Coffee Farmers Association. Ferrari Coffee has roasted about 800,000 pounds of coffee in their nearly 20 year history.

Initially, the business was located in Phoenix, Arizona. It was quickly successful and was carried in high-end grocery stores like AJ's Fine Foods. They built up their wholesale and retail customers and life in Phoenix was going well but Mike was missing his hometown. He presented the idea of moving their roasting business to Oshkosh to Mark, he worked through all of the potential objections, the town was too small, delivering to/from would be cumbersome, etc. Mark's initial response was not one of support for this plan but eventually they headed up and opened their Oshkosh location.

Mike said, "I really would have liked to be on Main

Street but we're just a block off."

Raised in Oshkosh, Mike Peva wasn't sure he'd ever come back home. Like many Nebraskans, he left his hometown for college. Kearney wasn't too far but it was a totally different world than a town of around 800. After graduation he left for Phoenix and had a variety of jobs in finance and IT before partnering with Mark and now, "I just do whatever needs to be done."

You can often find him greeting customers at the door with a smile. He and Peva seemingly know everyone who's stopping in and if they're working the cafe, you will get some conversation with your coffee.

Behind the cozy walk-up cafe is a spacious warehouse with a small commercial kitchen, a conference area, a shiny red industrial coffee roaster, and a bagging area. That roaster, "the Ferrari of roasters" can handle 400 pounds of green coffee per



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Ferrari Coffee offers a variety of sweets and beverages to customers in Oshkosh.

hour and, though it's more modern than the one Ferrari learned on in Hawaii, he still relies on old school methods and knows that 122 pounds of green coffee will result in a 100 pound yield when he factors in moisture levels and pays close attention to that smell, sound and desired roast. For the size of their operation their four person crew is small but "well taken

care of" and they have some very reliable contractors that will come in to help unload and load large deliveries as needed.

Coffee wasn't the only thing they were focused on when they initially moved to Oshkosh. They had a restaurant, they talked about expanding their cafe, and then they realized coffee roasting is their focus. They simpli-

fied it to four types of coffee: 100% Kona, espresso blend, gold blend, breakfast blend, and a selection of flavored coffee. They turned the cafe into a calm place with the goal of having people feel "Aloha" when they arrive. They display their retail bags of coffee alongside a few hats and T-shirts, a couple of books, and, recently, jewelry from their Hawaiian friend Ted Dailey.

Dailey and Ferrari had been friends for years and Ferrari had admired his silver work. One late spring evening they were talking, Ferrari on his back porch, and Dailey asked what the weird noises he was hearing were. It was during sandhill crane migration and when that distinctive sound crossed the wires it inspired a beautiful piece of silver, shell and stone that became one of several very popular pieces of jewelry carried in the store. Ferrari shared, "It's like nothing people have seen. We've sold hundreds of pieces. Also, for

some reason the manta rays are very popular."

You won't see Ferrari coffee in grocery stores or restaurants within 100 miles of Oshkosh. Why? Because it's such a high-end, exclusive, coffee they want locals to make their shop a destination so they can taste it exactly as it should be prepared. The public can purchase it on their website, various retailers online, or when in Lincoln, they can enjoy it at Casa Bovina or shop The Mercato.

Ferrari and Peva truly feel like they've settled into Oshkosh. The business is nearly 20 years old and they've been in Nebraska longer than they were ever in Phoenix. "We've watched kids grow up and head off to college and they come back and say that they can't find coffee as good as ours," Peva said.

It's also unlikely that they've found a cinnamon roll as divine as the Sweet Mac. It's unlikely that many people have found a roll worth of a three hour round trip.