

The Wrap: A new bakery in Brunswick, a new Holy Donut in Auburn

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By Meredith Goad

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Brunswick residents are buzzing about a sign that recently appeared in a balloon-filled window at 66 Maine St. It hinted that a place called Ritual Bakehouse and Patisserie is going to be opening there, in the space formerly occupied by Timeless Cottage, a home décor store that closed in June.

I did a little sleuthing and discovered that the talent behind the new bakehouse is April Robinson, who most recently was the pastry chef at Tao Yuan. But she's done so much more, and folks in Brunswick are in for a treat (literally).

Robinson, who lives in Bowdoinham, moved to Maine 10 years ago, but spent most of her career as a pastry chef and baker in New York City and Hong Kong. "My training is classically French," Robinson said. "I spent most of my time in New York working for the European granddaddies. I worked for Alain Ducasse for a while. I opened his place in New York, and then I spent some time in France and Monaco."

She was the opening pastry chef at A Voce in New York, and worked at Compass Restaurant

and at chef Gray Kunz's Café Gray. In Hong Kong, where she spent two years, she was the



Stuffed croissants are among the "delicious things" you can expect from Ritual Bakehouse, opening in Brunswick. *Photo by Sarah Feldman*

opening pastry chef at Café Gray at The Upper House.

When Robinson moved to Maine, she worked at Fore Street for two years. After bouncing around to a few other odd jobs – and starting a family – she landed at Tao Yuan. Ritual Bakehouse will be the first business she’s launched that will be all her own.

“I haven’t had my own bakery,” she said, “but I’ve opened lots of them for other people.”

So what will she be making for hungry Brunswickians? (Is that a word?) Robinson hesitates to call it a European bakery because she is half Mexican. (She’s spent some time in Spain as well, along with her other travels.)

“I’m trying not to pigeonhole myself just because I feel like I learned some really wonderful things and ate some different delicious things when I was traveling through Europe or traveling through Asia or through Mexico,” Robinson said. “Really, I just want to make delicious things.”

Ritual Bakehouse will open before Thanksgiving if renovations are complete by then, but definitely by Christmas, Robinson said, “only because Christmastime is panettone time, right?”

The name of the bakehouse comes from a conversation Robinson had with friends in the industry about their favorite part of doing what they do. For Robinson, it’s the morning ritual of opening up.

“That’s my favorite part of the morning – that daily ritual of coming in and turning on the lights, turning on the coffee machine and sitting down to a little quiet time,” she said. “Who doesn’t love a little quiet time in the morning with your coffee and a croissant before you get on with the rest of your day?”

Venturing out

Leigh Kellis, the founder of Holy Donut, announced last week that a new Holy Donut shop will be opening before the end of the year in Auburn, which will be its first location outside of Portland.

The shop, [according to the Sun Journal](#), will be in a former Tim Horton’s location at the junction of Minot Avenue and Hotel Road.

Kellis is already holding pop-up sales for her [new vegan cookie business](#) that aims to help save the oceans from plastic pollution.

Will you register to vote? Sweet.

Best opening line of a news release this week: “Just like chocolate truffles, voters come in all flavors.”

So say Dean and Kristin Bingham, owners of Dean’s Sweets, which will host non-partisan voter registration events at both Portland locations from noon to 6 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. The chocolate stores are located at 475 Fore St. and 54 Cove St.

Voter registration cards will be available at each location for people to take home, and Dean’s Sweets employees (who were trained by election officials) will answer questions on the voter registration process, eligibility requirements and absentee voting.

“Voter registration and getting people to vote is the foundation of our democracy and giving people the information they need is the least we can do,” Bingham said.

Masks are mandatory, and staff and the public will be separated by plexiglass dividers.

On Election Day, voters get an “I voted” sticker. Will visitors to the voter registration events get, say, a free chocolate truffle? Bingham said they wanted to do that, but when they researched the protocol they discovered that “it’s actually against the law.” Under federal election law, they are not allowed to “incentivize” anyone to vote, she said.

So you’ll just have to pat yourself on the back by buying some chocolate while you’re there as a reward for being a good citizen.

Another restaurant closes. Thanks, pandemic.

Saturday will be the last day of service at Salt Pine Social in Bath, owners Eloise Humphrey and Daphne and Paul Comaskey announced “with a heavy heart” on social media last week. “After over 40 years in this industry, we feel it’s time for us to go,” they wrote. “The pandemic it seems is the final nail in the coffin for our industry. We find ourselves financially and emotionally unable to continue.”

El Camino in Brunswick, which closed last year, was also owned by Humphrey and the Comaskeys.

How ’bout them apples?

Got a lot of extra apples on your property? Anoché, the cider bar on Washington Street in Portland, wants them for its first Backyard Cider Project, which will turn the apples “into a unique cider that showcases the terroir of Maine.”



A 2017 photo of the dining room at Salt Pine Social, which will soon close for good. *Brianna Soukup/Staff Photographer*

“We thought this project could be a fun way to bring people together at a time when the pandemic is keeping us apart,” Anoché owner Erika Colby wrote on the bar’s Instagram page. “Pressing and fermenting juice into cider is an expression of hope in a better future.”

Bring your apples to [Anoché](#) between now and the end of October, any day of the week between 2 and 8 p.m. Leave them by the front door, then go to the window to let the staff know the apples are there. The apples will be pressed, fermented and bottled by Anoché and Cornish Cider Co. Bring a bushel or more, and you’ll be entered into a raffle for an apple tree from a local nursery.

The cider will be ready to drink next spring.

Mark your calendar

Chefs Devin Finigan and Rob Evans will be cooking dinner together at Aragosta in Deer Isle on Oct. 24.

Finigan is the executive chef and proprietor at Aragosta at Goose Cove. Evans is a James Beard Award winner and owner of Duckfat in Portland. Evans’ first chef position was at Goose Cove Lodge, the current home of Aragosta, so this will be like old home week for him. Pete Uzzell of the Oxbow/Duckfat Frites Shack will also be there.

Details on timing, price, menu and so on are still to come.

Natalie’s recognized by Wine Spectator

Natalie’s Restaurant at the Camden Harbour Inn has won a 2020 Restaurant Award from Wine Spectator magazine.

The awards honor the world’s best restaurants for wine. This year 3,776 dining destinations from all 50 states were recognized. Natalie’s won an Award of Excellence, which honors restaurants whose wine lists feature a well-chosen assortment of quality producers.

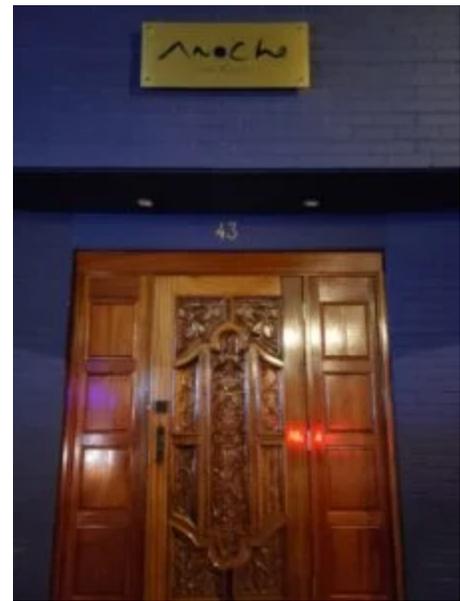
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Drop your extra apples at the front door of Anoché and drink cider made from them in the spring.

Photo by Angie Bryan