

Pretzel Village Adds New Twist To Baking Biz

By Dylan Kelley

Despite being in the business of serving baked goods at fairs, festivals, and events, one small operation in Sharon is slowly expanding its footprint during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Founded in 2015, Pretzel Village is the brainchild of baker J. Kaspar Sanchez, a Boston-area native with German and Spanish ancestry who traveled extensively through Germany and Austria to explore his culinary heritage.

Having sampled the best his ancestral homelands could offer, Sanchez set out to build upon the centuries-old tradition of soft pretzel making.

His pretzels, based on a German baker's guild recipe, are large mahogany-colored creations measuring about 6" across and sometimes weighing in at half a pound, depending on the variety of pretzel.

But where many bakers of German descent would simply toss their products in some big, crunchy salt or bagel seasoning before hanging them up for purchase, Sanchez likes to take things a step further.

"As much as we love to bake, we also love to play mad scientist sometimes," he said. "We wanted to do something special and really memorable."

Besides pretzels dusted with salt, everything bagel seasoning, and one variety with toasted cheddar cheese and smoked paprika, Sanchez also offers pretzels smothered with toppings such as blue cheese or wild chives or even

maple icing.

Finding Solutions

Despite a sturdy customer base along those in the Upper Valley, Sanchez said that the business, which largely depended on sales at farmers markets and other events, took an economic hit when the pandemic struck earlier this year—leaving Sanchez to find a new way of getting his product out into the world.

The pandemic forced the company to "make creative changes to the way we do business," he said.

Now, rather than relying on live events and catering, Sanchez has launched a new online store that allows customers to order directly from the bakery for pick-up or overnight delivery.

Customers, Sanchez said, can now place orders online and pick them up at one of four locations across the Upper Valley on Thursdays.

For those living further afield, Sanchez said the bakery has the option of overnight shipping to addresses in Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Jersey. Any further than that, he said, would require longer shipping than the preservative-free pretzels can handle before they lose their freshness.

"We really want to try to lift people up and make them happy," he said. "But I think the COVID crisis has forced everyone to think out of the box and to become more creative in the way they think about their businesses."