

Sweet Legacy

The Kaskes family shares a sweet tradition with the city of Bothell every time they pull a baking sheet out of their old reliable Oven King at the Hillcrest Bakery. Their legacy began in Wormer, The Netherlands, in 1838, where The Kaskes Bakery is still operating. >>

BY KAYLA SCHROADER | PHOTOS BY TRACEY AYTON



Old School

The Hillcrest Bakery turns out their products through a line of very old machinery. According to the Kaskes, the over-sized mixer, weighted scale for measuring and the Oven King complete with five rotating racks, are all made to last and have fared well for the family, since the first day of business.

Try These

Apple fritter, maple bar, anything made with their homemade marzipan and their new garlic sourdough loaf.





∇ Peter Kaskes and his wife, Leida, on their wedding day. Below, 4-year-old Peter Kaskes in The Netherlands in 1938. Photos courtesy of the Kaskes family.



Peter Kaskes began working alongside his relatives in the kitchen in 1938 when he was 4 years old. He grew up baking. He later married Leida, following their betrothal in Holland, a ship transported the newlyweds to Montreal and they followed the railways to Vancouver, B.C. Peter went to work in a kitchen there. Soon, the couple were expecting different kinds of buns – their children – first Joyce, then Barb and Peter, followed by Tim, Craig and Robert.

Peter was hired as lead baker at Hillcrest Bakery in Bothell and after about a year, the owners offered to sell it to him. It was a huge honor, the trust they had to hand over the business to him, Leida says. “We had a hard time getting the cash together for the register,” she recalls. “We just started, and worked very hard to make the money.” She fondly remembers Peter devoting nearly 14 hours a day to baking the breads that initially made their business a success. His love and commitment to supporting their family was an attribute that only solidified the love and respect Leida had for her husband. Within five years of running Hillcrest Bakery, Peter and Leida had paid off their home, the car, the business truck and the bakery. The former owners were proud and confident that their old bakery was in good hands.

“You don’t see that much anymore, when someone just trusts you enough,” Leida says. But for her family, everything just clicked. “All the boys were bakers.” The Kaskes children would reflect the work ethic of their father, each finding their own place in the bakery.

“We all worked in the bakery at one time. It was in our blood,” says Barb Holm, the second eldest of the Kaskes children. “In high school, we’d smell like breads and doughnuts.”

Even though Peter died more than 20 years ago, the family business still is flourishing. His family recalls his high spirits in the bakery, evident through his loud, operatic singing voice beautifully bellowing from the back ovens. He was proud of his work, each and every cookie. Even on vacation, he’d pack a special pail full of Pete’s Famous Cookies, offering treats to strangers and the flight attendants throughout his trip. Leida still travels this way, in his memory.

These family ties have trickled down the tree to the grandchildren as well. They can be seen in the bakery from week to week. From helping “Oma” folding boxes and sampling cookies, to Barb’s son Neal’s current apprenticeship to be the next head baker, it’s certainly a family affair around Hillcrest Bakery.

“We really hope to keep it in the family,” Barb says. “I think we will, you just have to have the heart.” And heart is something the Kaskes have plenty of; 14 and counting, which means there is a good chance the family business has plenty of family members to keep it going for years to come. And that each and every cookie, bread, doughnut, muffin and so forth, will be created with love, excellence and a Kaskes’ stamp of approval – just like The Kaskes Bakery in The Netherlands has been doing for nearly two centuries. >>

Peter Kaskes rolls dough at Hillcrest Bakery. Kaskes has the same name as his father, who bought the bakery that still remains very much a family affair, especially around the holidays.

A Sweet Holiday

The Kaskes family joins together every Christmas Eve to spend an entire day prepping goodies at Hillcrest Bakery. Regardless of full-time careers elsewhere, this long-time tradition sets the stage for Christmas at Hillcrest, the busiest day of the year. The long work day is concluded with a glass of wine and a celebratory toast, while the boys smoke cigars out front. 🍷

Hillcrest Bakery

Location 10010 Main St., Bothell
Hours 6am to 6pm, Monday through
Friday and 6am to 5pm Saturdays
More Info. Hillcrestbakery.com