

Business Spotlight

45 Market Street

Cheryl Arsenault and Celeste Gingras each work at least 70 hours, six days a week preparing meals and baking for others. You would expect they would want to spend their limited free time anywhere but in a kitchen. Cheryl, co-owner of 45 Market Street Bakery & Café, shared that she likes to entertain and cook for her friends on her day off. You *have* to love what you do to say that! Both Cheryl and Celeste Gingras truly love what they do and have been doing it for a combined 75 years. Add their dedication to serving fresh, locally-sourced, made to order meals and you understand the secret to their success.

Both Cheryl and Celeste have been in the food service industry in one capacity or another since their youth. Cheryl grew up surrounded by the smells of fresh baked pastries and meals made from scratch by her mother and grandmother. By age 12 Cheryl was sending her parents to the grocery store with her list so she could prepare a meal for the family each week. At age 15 she was recruited to work in the kitchen at a summer boy's camp in rural Maine accessible only by boat or plane. No electricity to power the kitchen meant Cheryl would be developing some serious upper body strength as kneading dough by hand each day. Cheryl was unfamiliar with the gas ovens and quickly learned you needed to light the oven after turning on the gas when she blew the oven door clear across the kitchen on her first day.

Five stints at the summer camp and culinary school in between prepared Cheryl well. She soon met Celeste Gingras who had worked in the industry while studying for a career in social work. Early into her career Celeste learned that social work was rewarding and meaningful but also incredibly stressful. She was not the type of person who could leave work at work. She decided to try and get back into the kitchen but applying for work in the "back of the house" with a college degree wasn't an easy sell to the hiring manager. A resume rewrite got her in the door where she learned every aspect of the kitchen except for baking. One week into a summer break she met Cheryl Arsenault at the bakery Cheryl owned in Ogunquit. Celeste was drawn in by the "Help Wanted" sign and traded her summer vacation for an apron that very day.

Before coming to Somersworth the women ran a successful restaurant for 12 years on the seacoast. Their interest in the Eat Local movement grew and began participating in area farmer's markets. Eventually they outgrew their space and decided it was time to start a new venture and opened 45 Market Street Bakery & Café in downtown Somersworth. This June marks their 11th year in Somersworth and they continue to evolve and grow while staying true to their commitment to serving fresh, local, made to order meals.

The bakery and café offers wholesale accounts, participates in farmer's markets and is open six days a week serving baked goods and lunches to the public. 45 Market Street also offers a Comfort Food Share, a 12 week meal program in which the recipient receives a freshly baked loaf of bread, soup and a whole pie each week. I happened to be there during a Comfort Food Share pick up and witnessed the most beautiful fruit tart

being presented to the smiling recipient. That smile on the customer's face is what motivates Cheryl and Celeste to give 100 % each day and with each and every item they prepare. "We take pride in every plate we send out. We know we have given 100% every time and we don't serve anything we wouldn't eat ourselves," stated Cheryl. Celeste agrees adding that their goal is to beat their customer's expectations every time and to always strive to be creative, fair and consistent.

There are numerous challenges to running a successful food service business including sourcing the right food to run their café the way they need to run it. Finding small quantities and locally-produced items require daily shopping. Some of the ingredients come from their own garden where they grow a variety of herbs. Educating the public on what made to order truly means can also be a challenge. Vegetables for a salad are chopped *after* the order has been made, boiled eggs do not morph into egg salad until an order has been placed and there are no microwaves at 45 Market Street. If a piece of quiche needs to be warmed up it goes in the oven. "We live in a drive-thru society so it can be frustrating for someone who is used to that immediacy to have to wait five or ten minutes for their lunch. We won't do it any other way so our customers learn to adjust to a slightly slower pace," stated Celeste.

If a great meal means I have to sit and enjoy the aromas coming from their kitchen for a few minutes it is a sacrifice I am quite willing to make.

45 Market Street Bakery & Café
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