

JAPAN WHEAT CLUB

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Costeaux French Bakery & Café

*~ Time-Honored Bakery is Moving Forward
With the Next Generation's New Exciting Visions ~*

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Costeaux French Bakery & Café is expanding and diversifying its business from a bakery specializing in French Bread retail and wholesale; also retail desserts; a full service café; catering; and parties at the bakery by reservation.

Costeaux French Bakery & Café opened its doors in 1923 in Healdsburg, California 70 miles north of San Francisco. The current CEO, Karl Seppi, and Executive Vice-President, Nancy Seppi, bought the bakery from the original owner, Jean Costeaux, in 1981. Karl, a former professional golfer, quickly mastered the know-how of baking from Jean in less than a year's time. The Seppis have successfully continued the bakery's tradition of excellence for more than 25 years.

In the early years, they sold mostly bread. In 1989, they moved the business next-door to its present location. There, they created a café space, and started to sell cookies and desserts in full swing. Two and a half years ago, their son, William Seppi, who was trained as an accountant, joined the family business and became its General Manager. Next, Karla Lippincott, the Seppi's daughter, brought her experience in the restaurant business, and came on board as the Retail Manager taking charge of customer service and employee training. Because the numbers of their full-time and part-time employees increased to 45, and their kitchen (900 square feet) along with the store space (4,100 square feet) had become too small, they have established, six months ago, a new and separate, much larger baking facility (6,500 square feet).

At the Sonoma County Harvest Fair in 2006, *Costeaux French Bakery & Café* won Best of Show in two categories. *Costeaux* is the first bakery to win Best of Show for more than one category since the beginning of the Fair 30 years ago! Their French Country Loaf won the Professional Bread category. The secret to their success was to use both whole wheat and rye flour. Because of the rye their bread has a richer, fuller, and deeper body than ordinary sourdough bread. In the Specialty Bread category, *Costeaux* won Best of Show for Multigrain Batard. It is made of cracked wheat, barley, corn, millet, oats, rye, triticale, brown rice, soybeans, and flax seed. You can enjoy the natural sweetness of all the tasty grains of this nutrient-dense bread. Since William Seppi joined *Costeaux's* management team two and a half years ago, he has implemented a wide variety of improvements and the development of new products including the two prizewinners mentioned above. He started Research & Development (R&D) for new products. William stated, "Our customers just love these breads; many say they're the best, most delicious among all of our creations. Since the number of artisan bakeries has recently increased around this area, it is important for even a small bakery like us to keep working on

R&D for variety's sake. What's the latest trend? People are staying away from trans fat, and prefer the long-fermented and whole grain varieties of baked goods."

Costeaux has one retail store; therefore, almost all of their bread is sold wholesale. To set themselves apart from the competition, the bakery only closes three days a year – Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Six bakers work in relay every night. *Costeaux's* fresh bread is delivered to hotels, restaurants, and cafés. Currently, they bake from 3,000 to 5,000 loaves of bread a day, but now with their bigger baking facility they will increase production.

Their sales are half retail and half wholesale. Retail sales include café dining and catering in addition to selling breads, cakes, and other sweets. In the past the café customers ordered at the counter and then sat to wait for their food. *Costeaux* has now upgraded to a more sophisticated restaurant style and customers now order after they have been seated. There are nine dishes listed on their All Day Breakfast Menu (\$7.00 - \$10.00), including the delicious Brioche Pain Perdu, which is French toast made with thick slices of their brioche fresh from the oven. It is topped with sliced banana and chopped walnuts generously dressed in a caramel sauce, with an individual pitcher of Vermont maple syrup on the side. They also serve tasty quiches, omelets and sandwiches. Their Lunch Menu (\$9.00 - \$11.00) offers nine mouth watering dishes including their fabulous French Onion Soup, salad, and sandwiches.

Another future goal for *Costeaux* is to expand its catering services for special events. Their entire retail store can be reserved for events after store hours. William Seppi sees great potential in becoming a venue specializing in rehearsal dinners, which are an American tradition of feasting with friends and family the night before the day of the wedding. "We didn't do a lot since we haven't advertised well enough to be known for rehearsal dinners yet. *Costeaux* is just beginning this enterprise. Once they start advertising and marketing this idea it should take off. Considering the number of weddings held here in Healdsburg between the months of April to October, and number of hotels around, I wouldn't be surprised if we are booked for every Friday night during this period. The rent here on our site is inexpensive. You can enjoy a sit-down, three-course delicious dinner for \$35.00 to \$40.00 per person. The whole space of our bakery store will be reserved for each party. As we are located in the hub of Healdsburg, the wedding party won't have to worry about arranging transportation for all of their guests."

For more than 10 years, *Costeaux* holds an annual event named "Breakfast with Santa." Every Sunday morning from the end of November to Christmas Day, their retail bakery store is filled with Christmas decorations. Children not only enjoy brunch with Santa but they can have their pictures taken with him as well. Initially, only patio space in front of the store was used with a double seating of groups of 30 to 40 diners. Since last year, 2006, to simplify all of the logistics that are necessary to rearrange all the tables, the Seppi family has decided to use the entire store space accommodating 80 to 100 people in one sitting. It took so much time to take orders from all of the children filled with so much merriment that they devised one special kids' menu with a variety of foods. William Seppi said, "No one else has created such an idea, so it is definitely a niche market. It takes a lot of time to prepare, but the customers are really happy with their experience. Every weekend, a total 80 to 100 people, including 20 to 30 children with their parents, family and friends, all join us with Santa. Some families come back every year making us a part of their Christmas Holiday traditions."

The Seppi family's *Costeaux French Bakery & Café* is embarking upon a new era that blends their pursuit of productivity, efficiency, and innovation while keeping their time-honored tradition of quality for which their bakery is famous.

Captions & Legends

(from top down, left to right)

P. 8

- 1) *Inside of the store*
- 2) *Sourdough baguettes & other recommended bread varieties*
- 3) *William Seppi, General Manager (left) & Karla Lippincott, Retail Manager (right)*
- 4) *Seasonal fresh fruit & quiches*

P. 9

- 5) *Brioche Pan Perdue – French toast made with brioche from their oven (slices of banana & chopped walnuts dressed in a caramel sauce with a Vermont maple syrup on the side)*
- 6) *Golden crust breads on back shelves, pastry & cookies in a front showcase*
- 7) *On the premises. Their numerous medals from a variety of awards hang on the left wall. You can see the photographs of Karl Seppi & Jean Costeaux baking breads together on the right wall.*
- 8) *(Clockwise from top left) Ice Box with walnuts, chocolate crinkles (soft chocolate cookies), Grandma's hazelnut biscotti, blueberry sandwich, oatmeal raisin cookies; rugelach (filling of apricot, raisin, pecans & cinnamon) in center.*