

FOOD: From cupcakes to "plonks," new bakeries satisfying sweet tooth

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Life is much sweeter nowadays for Southern California residents, as a handful of bakeries with varying specialties ---- from cupcakes to gluten-free items to plonks (just keep reading) ---- have opened in the past year in San Diego and Southwest Riverside counties. Here's a look at a half-dozen of them.

Gordy's Bakery

Where: 441 Encinitas Blvd., Encinitas

When: 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday; 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday

Prices: Baked goods, average \$1.50-\$2.50; coffee drinks, \$1.50-\$4.50

Info: 760-753-4982; gordysbakery.com

Residents of North County for more than a decade may remember the original Gordy's Bakery, a wholesale bakery and local favorite that cooked, boxed, shipped and delivered items out of a kitchen in an industrial park near McClellan-Palomar Airport. Owner Gordy Haskett sold the bakery, along with his recipes and his name, in 2000. But now he's back with a storefront in Encinitas, selling the same items locals loved years ago.

"When people realize it's the same thing, they go crazy," Haskett said. "It's been 10 years, and people still remember the products."

Haskett was born and raised in the area, graduating from what is now San Dieguito Academy. He started baking when he was young because, as a runner, he was always hungry. One of the things he loved to make was oatmeal cookies, which eventually led to his signature item ---- the plonk (oats, raisins, brown sugar, bananas, dates, walnuts, cinnamon, ginger and more).

"The plonk was a mistake," he said. "It shouldn't work, but it does. ... It's an oatmeal cookie gone wrong in a muffin shape."

"If you taste a plonk compared to our plonk, nobody does it like us."

Before opening the original Gordy's Bakery, Haskett hoped to open a late-night coffee house, like the ones he saw during a visit to Australia. After many failed attempts to gain funding, he put that dream on hold for the bakery.

After selling the business in 2000, Haskett worked at Movin' Shoes in Encinitas for 10 years (he said it was supposed to be one). Through that job, he was able to coach cross-country at San Dieguito Academy.

Then his coffeehouse dream came true when the new Gordy's Bakery opened about two months ago. Haskett starts baking at 5:30 a.m., leaves at 3 p.m. to coach, then comes back to the bakery to clean up.

"With everything I did putting this place together, the only thing I wouldn't give up is those kids," Haskett said.

The local connections don't stop there. Haskett's brother provides the artwork for his placards, and the walls of his bakery boast old No Knife posters. Members of the local band worked at his old bakery, and after closing hours, they would push the carts out of the way to practice.

Another local band, Boilermaker, also used the space. One of its members, Terrin Durfey, who was also a member of Pinback, passed away in 2008 after a long battle with cancer. Haskett named one of his items, the Durfey (made with oats, apple, dates, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, cloves), in his honor.

Other items include the B-Bar (oats, chocolate, caramel, walnuts), Lunch Lady Bar (try it for yourself), Sweeney Todd Meat Pie, Sausage Roll and more. Most foods have a British influence, from Haskett's family.

Haskett also sells coffee drinks, including Americano, Espresso Mocha, Caramel Mocha, Vanilla Latte and more, completing the dream he had years ago in Australia.

"I got my goal," he said. "Twenty-five years later, I got what I was after."