

Longtime manager returns to G Cafe with new brunch menu

By Lisa Reisman

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BRANFORD — Round about the end of January, word began to spread from Route 1 in Branford, up and down Main Street, and along Route 146 to Stony Creek village.

Jane's back.

Jane Frankenberger, the erstwhile manager of G Cafe Bakery, that is, who's back with a new Sunday brunch menu, among oth-

er initiatives, for the Main Street eatery.

She'd left 2½ years before for an opportunity she couldn't turn down, as she put it. It didn't work out.

During that time, "the place wasn't the same," said Branford's Leighton Davis waiting in line among a crush of lively lunch goers as Frankenberger flitted between the kitchen and the front counter, greeting customers

and taking orders.

"This is what was missing," he said, gesturing at Frankenberger amid the aroma of fresh baked bread.

Not that bread, of course. G Cafe continued to carry the same extraordinary variety, from Vol-kornbrot to Sourdough to traditional Jewish Rye to Fitness bread. Rich in fiber, high in protein, low

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G Cafe Bakery General manager Jane Frankenberger stands with two of the cafe's fresh artisan breads at the Branford bakery and cafe.

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in fat, it still was changing the way people think about bread. It still was of such renown, thanks to owner Andrea Corrazini's wizardry as a baker, that people throughout the country routinely ordered it online.

The setting likewise was the same. Same spot in the heart of Branford, with the Green across the street and the outdoor tables a prime place for people-watching. Same European artisan cafe vibe.

Nor was it the menu, it seemed. There was still the avocado toast; the same fresh mozzarella, tomato, and basil in the Caprese Panini; the spinach omelets made from cage-free eggs.

Of course, with Frankenberger back, if that omelet isn't prepared the way you want it, you can send it back. If you're on a gluten- or dairy-free diet, or suffer from celiac disease, or would just prefer your roasted turkey without bread, no problem. Likewise for vegan options as dairy alternatives.

"Jane will fix it, she'll adjust it," said Shelly Johnson. "She takes that much pride in service."

It's quite simple for Frankenberger, 59, a Hamden native who took to cooking at a young age and owned the popular Poor Penny's and TJ's Breakaway in New Haven, and Mom's Country Muffins in Killingworth.

"If you choose to be in the service industry, you have to be the best you can be," said the charismatic, straight-talking mother of two, relaxing in the seating area after the lunch hour rush. "You have to think of the customer as your lifeblood. Otherwise, go sit behind a desk."

That's the ingredient Frankenberger adds, ac-



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G Cafe Bakery manager Jane Frankenberger organizes food before the noon lunch rush at the Branford bakery and cafe.

ording to Marcello LaGrecia, recounting an occasion when he observed her watching a customer who had been standing in line turn and leave.

"Jane had been bussing tables and her face just fell," he said. "She asked one of the staff what had happened. Turned out the customer was coming right back."

That's Frankenberger, according to G Cafe regular Mern Palmer-Smith, owner of Coco's on the Green, on Montowese. "She goes out of her way to make you feel at home. She wants the customer to feel like a guest."

"Or a member of the family," said Sylvia DeSantis, who was finishing a Black Forest Ham panini at a nearby table.

Likewise for her staff, it seems.

"Jane thinks of us as a team," said summer intern Kim Klarman, a student in hospitality management at Johnson & Wales University in Providence, as she wiped down the counters in the gleaming kitchen.

"She's always training us, encouraging us," she said, referring to the weekly staff meetings when Frankenberger reinforces the finer points of customer service. "Last week, it was saying 'I don't know but I'll find out.'"

"We're a teeny weeny place," Frankenberger said, as she admired a new counter custom-built by Rocco Pascarella, a regular customer. "That's why we have to get everything right. Of course there's going to be glitches. We're going to get an order wrong. A customer's going to be dissatisfied with something. The challenge is to do what we can to make it right."

The other challenge is to keep everything fresh and exciting, with new creations and specials.

Which is where the Sunday brunch menu comes in. "I took the most popular items on my regular menu and added seven or eight new dishes," Frankenberger said, her face lighting up. "You've got your egg boule with a brioche bun. You've got your avocado toast, but topped with poached egg and bacon. It's awesome."

With that, she noticed Palmer-Smith heading out the door back to Coco's. "Go enjoy that soup, Mern," she said.

Palmer-Smith stopped for a beat. "Glad to have you back, Jane," she said, smiling.

G Cafe Bakery is on 1008 Main St. Branford. 203-208-0930; gcafebakery.com.