

Krissy and Todd Biernacki, owners of Blue Skies Bakery, share their love of high-quality breads and granola blends.



Seven-Day, Hand-Built Bread

Blue Skies Bakery turns out bread made with historic technique

By Jeanie Senior

Blue Heaven Leaven is seven-day bread.

“It’s all very slow,” baker Todd Bernacki says of the effort that goes into making what Blue Skies Bakery calls hand-built bread.

Todd starts building on Friday, grows the dough until it is ready to shape into loaves on Wednesday and begins baking early on Thursday.

The ingredients are basic: water, organic wheat and rye flour, sea salt, natural wild yeast and organic olive oil.

Todd’s enthusiasm for bread baking led to the establishment of Blue Skies in White Salmon about 3½ years ago. Before that, he built houses. His wife, Krissy, taught dance and headed the Trout Lake community-supported agriculture project.

Todd’s bread-baking skill is the heart of a wholesale business that sells bread in stores from Trout Lake to White Salmon and Hood River. Area restaurants also serve both Blue Heaven Leaven and Blue Skies foccacia bread. Blue Skies granola, a

product Krissy developed, is in local stores and at retailers in Portland, Seattle and Bend.

Growth has been steady, says Krissy, who manages marketing and distribution, as well as other aspects of the company.

“We kind of built the business the way we wanted,” she says. “Everybody understands now that it’s a long process, and they are happy with that.”

She says the long fermentation process makes the bread more digestible and increases the availability of nutrients.

“There’s a lot of science in this art for me,” says Todd, whose background is in chemical engineering.

The couple met while attending the University of Washington. After graduation, Todd worked as a chemical engineer for a high-tech water treatment company, a job that took them to Singapore for three years.

After returning to Seattle, Todd spent four years restoring and remodeling their home, a 100-year-old houseboat. Incorporating recycled building

Where to Buy Blue Skies

Blue Skies bread is sold at Dickey Farm in Bingen; Glenwood General Store in Glenwood; Trout Lake Grocery in Trout Lake; Feast and Thriftway Harvest Market in White Salmon; and Boda's Kitchen, Mother's Marketplace, Farm Stand and Rosauer's in Hood River. The granola is available at most of those locations. Hood River Organics CSA also delivers Blue Skies products, or they can be bought online from Azure Standard.

materials and a lot of creativity and craftsmanship, the project earned him accolades in *This Old House* magazine and other publications.

"Whatever he does, he does really well," Krissy says.

Seven years ago, they bought land north of BZ Corner, where Todd built a new home for their family.

His building background served him well as they furnished the bakery in a building originally intended to be a workshop. Todd rebuilt equipment they bought at auction, and he sourced materials for the building. Through a friend of a friend, they found and installed an Italian hearth oven.

Pristine and sunny, the bakery is an efficient space that, on a "shaping" day, has only a light dusting of flour where Todd and helper Sazja Sears work. A machine that looks at a glance like a large industrial washing machine sections a large quantity of dough into 20 evenly sized portions.

Todd and Sazja work quickly and precisely, shaping the loaves to go into rising bowls.

Todd says he developed the Blue Heaven Leaven bread recipe and technique from bread-baking classes taught by his friend and mentor Carl Shavitz, a master baker who runs the Artisan Bread School in England and teaches classes in the U.S., France and Italy.

Todd also has taken classes in Vermont from master bakers at King Arthur Flour's baking school.

"I've learned from some really great people," he says.

Both Todd and Krissy are focused on the business as a way to engage with the community.

"To have a small business here, where you're hiring local people to help you," Krissy says. "It's really nice to be in touch with the local economy." ■



Todd and his helper, Sazja Sears, shape loaves for rise.



A loaf of Blue Heaven Leaven, packaged for sale.

For more information, call (509) 876-7395.