

# Frosting Flandreau

*Two generations of bakers have cultivated the taste buds of Flandreau's citizenry for 88 years*

STORY AND PHOTOS BY STACI PERRY



*Ilsa Grindeland, Don Duncan, Ed Duncan and Colin Myears (shown clockwise from left) prepare one of the old bakery's made from scratch recipes.*

“THEY DON'T WANT IT CHANGED. When people come in, they comment how it looks exactly the same, even the phone on the wall. And that's what they expect,” says Don Duncan of the Flandreau Bakery & Coffee Bar. Mel Duncan got the keys to the bakery in 1929 as payment on a debt. Eighty-eight years later, his sons Don and Ed still rise in the wee hours every morning to light the ovens and mix ingredients for an impressive menu of sweet rolls, breads, pies and cakes.

There have been a few changes and challenges, including a new name and several moves. But since 1940 the Duncans have fed their town of 2,300 people

at 105 East Second Avenue. During World War II, the Duncan family traded ration stamps for honey, sugar and butter. In 1957, they bought an adjacent meat market and used the space to display their growing selection of pastries and a full-service lunch area.

Mel Duncan worked at the bakery until the day he died in 2005 at the age of 94. His sons inherited their father's work ethic, and his devotion to the community. Don flips the lights on at 1 a.m., when the little city of Flandreau — 45 miles north of Sioux Falls — is mostly asleep. Ed joins him at 3 a.m. They mix, bake, fry, frost and slice as the sun rises. Then Ed makes deliveries and they come back in



the afternoon to prep for the next day.

Don and Ed attribute their success to dedicated employees (some who have worked there for 40 or 50 years) and original made-from-scratch recipes developed by their father.

Jackie McDaniel, a longtime bakery clerk, enjoys being part of a Flandreau institution. "This is the first job I've had where my boss works harder than I do," she says.

A customer recently remarked he always visited Mel Duncan's house on Halloween because the baker gave bookmarks to trick-or-treaters. Children still love the Duncans. "My grandkids come see me here more than they do at home," laughs McDaniel.

Don and Ed make 30 varieties of bread for walk-in customers and for delivery throughout town; the hospital, nursing home, assisted living, restaurants, convenience and grocery stores, country club, coffee shop and even the big Royal River Casino.

Bread varieties include sunflower, farmers, French, whole wheat, rye, multi grain, seven grain, rustic — all neatly presented on metal racks just inside the door. Extra hot dog and hamburger buns are ready for summer weekends. How does a family bakery create and maintain such a loyal following for 88 years?

"Everything is going to taste like this place; nowhere else," says Don. You might say the population has become addicted. For example, a generation of school kids got hooked on the chocolate cake donuts because of a reading program implemented by a local teacher; read a book, get a free donut. "It snowballed from there and the kids fell in love with the donuts," says Don.

Flandreau students frequented the bakery's coffee bar for lunch for many years until the new school opened in 1969 and ended an "open campus" policy. As traffic in Flandreau's downtown district dwindled, the Duncans decided to quit serving meals but locals still gather around a few tables and orange

stools for small talk. Some enjoy coffee and toast made from fresh-baked bread, self-service and on the honor system. Conversations run the gamut from sports to politics and grandkids; some wisecrack is likely to make a "Dunkin' Donuts" pun.

Long before the lunches ended, youth of the community had developed a taste for the Duncan style of baking. The best proof comes every summer when committees plan their Flandreau family and school reunions: first they choose a time and place, then they call the bakery for breads and rolls.

Vanilla mocha cake, also known as Blarney stones or peanut cake bars, might be the all-time favorite. (They actually contain zero mocha.) Cathie Rae Bauske, a classmate of Ed's, lived in Flandreau from 1956 to 1970 and now has the mocha cakes shipped to her in Arizona. "I had them all through school and almost 50 years later I still am addicted to them," says Bauske. Flandreau residents can call the bakery for delivery within the city limits.

Classics at the Flandreau Bakery are cream horns, cinnamon bread, cherry turnovers, donuts, long johns, sour cream raisin pie and chocolate chip cookies, but regulars also look forward

to the Duncans' seasonal and specialty treats. They don't always have to wait for autumn favorites because the brothers bake pumpkin and pecan pies all year. "We keep going with those pies because people want them," shrugs Don with a smile. Old-fashioned candies like anise candy and peanut and coconut brittle are available during the winter holidays until the humidity ruins the candy-making process.

Other specialties include thumbprint and spritz cookies, cutout cookies in the shape of bells, trees and stars for Christmas, and special cookie shapes to celebrate Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Easter and Halloween. Easter egg cakes, hand-dipped in chocolate or white icing were so popular this year that the bakers had to refuse new orders. Wedding, birthday and graduation cakes are made almost daily, and good customers know that the delicious homemade pizza crusts are in a cooler along the west wall.

Somebody's bad luck 88 years ago turned out to be a good deal for Flandreau. Ed and Don are in their 60s, however, so customers worry that their good fortune may not last.

"They keep begging us not to look up," says Don. "But nobody lives forever." 🐼

## BUCKETS OF FROSTING

How much frosting does a popular bakery make? We got the answer when we asked the Duncan brothers to share a recipe, not thinking about how it might overwhelm our little kitchen mixer. You might need a calculator to cut it down to size if you try this at home.

### FLANDREAU BAKERY BUTTERCREAM ICING

24 pounds Crisco

15 pounds water

100 pounds powdered sugar

lemon, vanilla, and butter flavor

Cream Crisco until light. Add powdered sugar, water and lemon, vanilla and butter flavor. Mix for 10 minutes. Consistency will be light and fluffy. (Used on mocha cakes, decorated cakes, long johns and as a filling inside the cakes and long johns.)

