

International Bakery is On a Roll

Business is good at International Bakery, 5106 S. 24th St., where a steady stream of customers make their selections from more than 157 varieties of Hispanic breads, along with a wide assortment of donuts, apple turnovers, croissants and custom cakes. Specialty items that are best sellers include white bread filled with combinations of ingredients such as cream cheese, jalapenos, Chorizo and chipotle.

"We have more than 16,000 transactions per week," said Francisco Gonzalez, who opened the bakery in 2003 with his sister, Mayra, and their parents, Jose and Maria. "On a typical day, we will move 5,000 Bolillo, which is like a dinner roll. On Thanksgiving, Fourth of July and Christmas holidays, we'll sell more than 10,000 Bolillo."



Francisco Gonzalez (far right) with employees (from left) Pedro Martin, Juan Lopez and Mauri A. Sanchez.

The bakery's current building is nearly double the square footage of its original location, which started with a single display case and a limited selection of 24 varieties of bread and pastries. During the past decade, the bakery has added 33 employees and opened a second location in Fremont that Mayra operates.

Future plans call for relocating the South Omaha bakery to a nearby building equipped with new energy-saving ovens imported from Europe and a drive-thru window. A grand opening of that location is planned for July 2014.

Reflecting on the success

of International Bakery, Francisco Gonzalez credited his family recipes handed down from their grandfather who operated a bakery in Hidalgo, Mexico, as well as a business model that is focused on serving the Hispanic community. "The combination of good quality at a very good price is the main reason for our success," he acknowledged.

A third generation baker, Francisco gained experience at an early age working in a bakery his father operated in California. "When I was about six years old, my dad used to take me to work after school and on weekends, where my brother and I would

help him out," he recalled. "I started washing dishes and sweeping floors before he put me on the work tables making bread."

After moving to Omaha, the family made Hispanic breads at home in their kitchen oven with its maximum baking capacity of 12 rolls. Francisco and his brother would work in all-night shifts baking bread, which their father would sell locally and in towns surrounding Omaha.

Despite the family's expertise in the bakery business and their strong work ethic, several banks in Omaha were reluctant to provide them financing to open a retail bakery in South Omaha. "We went to five different banks with \$2,000 that we had saved, but they all told us that we could never open a business with such a small amount," according to Gonzalez.

The family's dream became a reality after an employee at First National Bank at 24th and Oak Streets was impressed with their story and arranged the financing to get them started. "We're very grateful to First National Bank for believing in us and loaning the money to start our business," Gonzalez added. "We've never done a loan with any bank except First National. Their rates are competitive and they're always willing to help out when we talk to them about our expansion plans."



International Bakery in Omaha offers more than 157 varieties of breads and pastries.



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