

BY JUDY HEVRDEJS FOOD FORETHOUGHT

How sweet it is: local baked goods on the rise

Carol Goldman and Gary Hopmayer are passionate people—when it comes to baking. Goldman, of Highland Park, and Hopmayer, of Wilmette, are the creators and driving forces behind two of the hottest enterprises to come out of north suburban kitchens in recent years.

Goldman bakes incredibly delectable chocolate cookies. Hopmayer's specialty is scones—rich, buttery creations of incomparable flavor. Both have built up a sweet reputation for their fabulous baked goods and their businesses: **Carol's Cookies** and **Original American Scones**.

Hard work and enthusiasm have helped these bakers—both in their 40's—triumph in second careers.

Hopmayer sold automotive parts for more than 20 years. Goldman was a social worker. Today, both head popular businesses that they began simply with a passion for the fragrance and flavor of fresh-baked goods.

Oddly enough, Gary Hopmayer had never really baked until he and his wife, Meme, traveled to Spain. There, they fell in love with fresh-baked bread. Hopmayer returned home, retired from his work in auto parts and began a life immersed in flour, yeast, cream, sugar and butter. He's never looked back.

A man who calls himself both "compulsive and a perfectionist," he worked his way through the mechanics of breadbaking, studying cookbooks and following the directions with the mechanical precision of, well, someone who'd been trained in auto repair.

It was only after meeting a talented East Coast baker that Hopmayer tackled the tough part of baking: learning to understand the soul of bread doughs. During one of the training sessions with the baker, Hopmayer the protégé got hooked on scones. He passed them out to friends. Neighbors got free samples. When a pal asked him to do 500 scones for a Hollywood party, Hopmayer's sweet future was sealed.

"In the six months we've been at

this, we've at least tripled our production," says Hopmayer, who has since moved the baking operations from the kitchen to the basement where a board covering the pool table serves as the scone rolling and cutting area.

"We just installed a second convection oven," says Meme, Hopmayer's co-baker. These days, Gary and Meme rise at 5 a.m. to begin baking the 250 dozen scones a week needed to fill their orders. They are available in 10 flavors including chocolate chip, toffee and lemon ginger. These are not the bland, tough biscuit-like scones traditionally served at af-

Chicago location with on-the-premise baking and a retail operation.

"It's the passion for baking, that's what is important," he explains. "You've got to enjoy the thrill of creating a wonderful something. When I see someone eating something as real and basic as bread, well, that's good honest stuff. You have to get excited about what you're doing."

Carol Goldman would be the first to agree. Another north suburban baker who began her sweet operation in 1983 out of the family kitchen, Goldman has since opened separate baking operations in Highland Park. Indeed,

Goldman and her two-person baking team turn out 10,000 cookies a week in seven varieties, including chocolate chip, oatmeal raisin, double chocolate and sugar cookie. Sold through such retail outlets as Neiman-Marcus, Sunset Foods, DeeJays, various restaurants and caterers, her cookies are quite unlike so many other cookies now available, Goldman says. "My cookies are thick like a cake and chewy. They're not greasy and they don't taste stale."

Sidetracked by college, a career in social work and two children, it wasn't until Goldman began helping out at the snack bar of a posh exercise studio that she began to focus on the cookie business.

"I had brought some and sold them through the snack bar," Goldman recalls. "Those were a hit. Then I tried Sunset Foods."

The rest is history for Goldman. The cookies went over big at Sunset Foods and stunned them at

Neiman-Marcus. People magazine ranked Carol's Cookies with Mrs. Fields and Famous Amos in a 1984 nationwide chocolate chip cookie challenge. Today, Goldman still mixes the batters herself to protect her special recipes.

As for the future, Goldman is busy increasing the number of cookie varieties available and expanding the retail outlets where her cookies are sold. She's even considering plans to market the cookies nationwide.

"I'm expanding slowly," she says. "I'm at the mixing bowls by 6:30 a.m. I never tire of just baking."



The pride of Wilmette: Gary Hopmayer's scones.

ternoon tea in England. Original American Scones, rich with butter, beg to gobbled.

"I used to bake them and run them around to the stores," Hopmayer says, "but the business is evolving, and the bigger stores get my products frozen and bake them in the store so the customer can have the freshest-baked product possible. And Meme is busy overseeing recipe development." Hopmayer's scones are available only through stores such as J. Bildner & Sons, Sunset Foods, Don's Finer Foods and selected caterers, though Hopmayer has his eye on a downtown