



SHOW NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE SHOW NOTES

Episode Title: Backhaus

Episode # & Date: Episode #18 – February 27, 2020

About this Episode: Is there anything better than eating an authentic warm croissant with butter? How about seeing it be made right in front of you? If you don't already know about **Backhaus** at 32 - 3rd Ave. in downtown San Mateo, get there before all the croissants are gone!

Episode Web Page: <https://sanmateofocus.com/backhaus/>

EPISODE TRANSCRIPT

I'm Judy Gordon, and *this* is San Mateo Focus.

Imagine that in 2013 you had no experience baking bread or running a business. But by 2019 you've developed a following outside your own cafe every morning. People are lined up to purchase your selection of breads and pastries, all baked and developed by you. And oh, by the way, the design choices for the bakery kitchen and cafe, with a partial glass wall for watching the bakers at work, were all made by you and your business partner. In short, that's that story of Anne Moser, who along with her husband Robert, owns Backhaus Bakery in Downtown San Mateo. In those few years, Anne baked her first loaf of bread from a recipe in the Tartine Bread Cookbook, worked from her apartment kitchen to start her business, moved to Kitchentown in San Mateo, where she used their commercial kitchen to learn about producing on a larger scale, and then leased and completely remodeled an old travel agency space on 3rd Avenue to become the permanent home of Backhaus in Downtown San Mateo.

Anne grew up in Germany and lived in France for a while before she moved to the United States. Bakers in Germany go through an apprentice program and are certified by passing an exam. You can't just open up a bakery unless you have the education. Growing up, she was never more than a five-minute walk from a local bakery. The bakery was also a place where you'd run into neighbors on their way to work or at the end of the day to grab their fresh baked goods. In her family, baking was an expression of caring. But she did not actually bake bread until she first came to the US and could not find the type of bread that she was accustomed to in Europe. She was surprised how good her first loaf of homemade bread was, and that's when her research started. There are a lot of online resources for home bakers and she experimented with recipes.

Anne realized that she could not afford to go to culinary school, but she did hear about other bakers who had started their own business without formal training. After moving to San Mateo, she and Robert made a commitment to open up their own cafe and jumped into the business.



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When they leased the former travel agency that would become Backhaus on 3rd Avenue, a whole new learning process started for Anne and Robert. As they were working on their plans for the new space with the architect, a small store next door became available and they added it to their lease. They needed to revise their plans to include that space. Building out the bakery and cafe took a full year after plans were approved. They did not want to bake off-site in an industrial area and then bring the bread to the bakery to sell. They wanted to do it all in the same place and help customers learn about baking, which is why they included the viewing window into the bakery. Anne says that is was a crazy learning curve to start her business, naming just some of the things that she had to learn firsthand: organizing a kitchen, organizing inventory, finding distributors, planning production to maximize efficiency, learning maintenance on equipment, learning to manage and train people, HR, payroll, learning health codes, and ordering supplies for the sinks and dishwasher, and all the cafe items. The difficulty of managing a team was more challenging than she knew. She says that they have a wonderful team in place now. They are trying to be a really good business for people to work, to pay people as well as they can, and to show that they care about the growth of their employees.

Their baking standards are high and they don't want to drop the quality of their products, and ingredients. It takes time to make bread. It can be up to a three-day process. It's a balancing act, which is sometimes frustrating for customers if a product runs out early in the day. They make their jams in-house with seasonal fruits, and rotate products based on seasons and tastes. Pretty soon, in preparation for Easter, they'll be making hot cross buns.

Anne has some words of advice for people who are thinking about starting a business from scratch. It's going to eat your life for years, but if you can push through those really difficult times there is nothing you can't figure out and accomplish. If you're willing to invest the time it's also endlessly rewarding. If you have the vision, then keep going! For Anne and Robert, the positive continued response from the community, both for the baked goods and the design of the cafe are the result of all their work.

Are you planning to head over to Backhaus to purchase a croissant, or loaf of bread, a pretzel, or a seasonal fruit pastry? *Here's the deal:* they're open Wednesday through Sunday, from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., and are at the CSM Farmer's Market on Saturdays. When you stop in the cafe, let them know that you heard about them on San Mateo Focus.

Okay, that's all the time we have for this episode. Have a great week. Thanks to Jack Radsliff for the original music to this podcast. If you'd like more information about our sponsor or the topics in today's episode, go to sanmateofocus.com.

HELPFUL LINKS:

<https://backhausbread.com/>

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— end of episode information > podcast show notes below —

PODCAST SHOW NOTES

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Description: Whether you're new to San Mateo, California, or a long time resident, the San Mateo Focus Podcast is the place to learn about local history, good eats, and things to do.

Website: <http://www.sanmateofocus.com>

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