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Sunday, July 14, 2013

The Bake Shop - Girdwood, Alaska Revisit July 13, 2012



The Bake Shop – Girdwood, Alaska

On my very first trip to Alaska the Bake Shop in Girdwood was a stop on a sightseeing bus tour. It has been a favorite place since then and it is one of the places that I have to take first time visitors to Alaska. It is a small store in the oldest Alyeska Ski Resort building. It certainly isn't fancy or even spacious. During the busy ski season the customers are lined up waiting to get in and those with food are taking seats at the outdoor picnic tables. Most of my visits have been during the off season, the summer time, and usually only a short wait is needed.



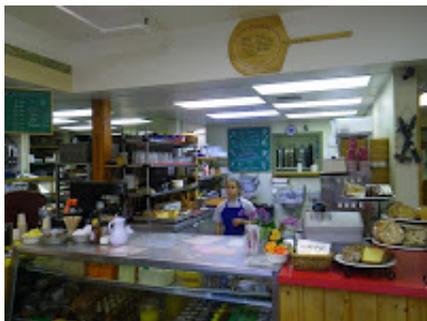
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The usual cloudy, overcast and often rainy skies cast a gray pall over Girdwood in the summer. To counter the gloom the Bake Shop decorates with flowers. Large planters overflow with vibrant red, pink, white, gold and yellow blooms making a cheery

sight. Considering the size of the planters at least a lift gate truck would be needed to move the planter boxes to greenhouse winter storage and back; all in all a significant effort.

As its name would imply, the Bake Shop makes bread and other baked goods. The giant-sized sweet roll and the sourdough buns are the best examples. The sourdough, the buns and the take-home bread, are famous. The sourdough starter dates back almost a hundred years. The buns, like little round shepherder breads, have a tough crispy crust with fragrant sourdough bread on the inside. When hot from the oven, sliced and slathered with butter and then paired with the soup of the day it is a meal to be to be desired.



During the summer of 2012 I had the pleasure of hosting my sister, Pattie Sue and her son, Ron. Sister has been to Alaska several times and knows the ropes, seen most of the sights. This was nephew Ron's first visit and, among other things, it called

for a trip to the Bake Shop in Girdwood, Alaska. It was to be an auto sightseeing tour day, covering great distances, but we planned it to be in Girdwood come lunch time. It all worked out well; hunger and destination converged.

The parking lot was moderately full. That was not surprising as summer sight-seeing tourists and winter time ski fans alike all frequent the Bake Shop; even tour busses stop there. The menu is in

very large print on the wall. You place your order at the counter and then look for a place to sit. Luck was with us and a table was vacant and we took seats on the pew benches to await our order. When your order is ready, they call your name and you pick it up at the counter.



Sister Pattie Sue ordered the grilled cheese on sourdough bread (\$5.75 She selected Havarti from a choice of Cheddar, Swiss and Havarti). The sandwich was made with

nice thick slices of freshly baked sourdough bread, well toasted to a golden brown and filled with a copious amount of cheese. The sandwich is served with an orange slice twist and some dill pickle chips. Pattie said the sandwich was excellent, the cheese hot and melted, the bread delicious sourdough. That may be a bit of a biased appraisal as she has learned to love the sourdough bread from the bake shop. The starter used in the Bake Shop is about 100 years old. If you bring in a suitable container and ask nicely, they will give you a sample of the starter to take home and make your own sourdough mix. On each trip to Alaska she has procured a sample of the sourdough to take back to Idaho. Small batches of starter used in home bread baking can change in flavor over time and Pattie takes advantage of the Bake Shop's generosity to renew her supply and guarantee that Bake Shop flavor at home.

Nephew Ron and I both ordered the same thing, the soup of the day and bun and butter. (Soup \$6.25, Bun and butter \$2.50) The soup of the day was clam chowder. The serving was a nice big bowl garnished with some fresh chopped parsley. The broth was thick and creamy with lots of clams and potatoes; a hearty soup with great



flavor. At \$6.60 a bowl the price may seem high but remember this is Alaska and Girdwood is halfway to the end of the road.

However, although it

doesn't say it anywhere on the menu, the policy of the Bake Shop is to refill your bowl without charge in which case the cost per bowl is less than in the Lower Forty Eight States.



The bun is more like a small loaf of round bread, about 4-inches in diameter. The Bake Shop heats them, slices them through and slathers them with butter. The skin is tough as with most sourdough but the bread inside is tender with a wonderful

sourdough aroma and a distinctive Girdwood flavor. A couple of bowls of soup (and the soup of the day changes every day) and a buttered bun are a filling and hearty meal and you feel prepared to tackle the rest of the day even in cold, overcast and rainy weather. It is no wonder why it is such a popular place during the ski season. Should you be fortunate enough to be in Girdwood during any season, take the time to have a meal at the Bake Shop. You will be glad that you did.

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