

Kitsap Sun

NEWS

Front Street's newest bakery brings back creativity of a pair of Kitsap chefs



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POULSBO -- The irresistible scent of fresh baked pastries drifts through a crowded storefront, just ten minutes after its doors open. People are scattered throughout, some sitting in the couch-style chairs with coffee and baked goods, or playing the board games on the bar-style table, and others eagerly awaiting a turn to order. It is the first week since Front Street's newest patisserie, Ma Façon TR, has opened, and word is already out.

The shop's logo echoes a Bainbridge Island business previously owned by the same two chefs. Tae Tran, the owner of Ma Façon TR, is the protégé of Tamas Ronyai, an accomplished international chef, and the two are continuing their culinary journey after working together for more than ten years.

Tran and Ronyai met when working at Mirabella, a retirement home in Seattle. Tran was working part-time as a server to help put himself through school, and Ronyai held the position of executive chef. Tran had been enrolled in Bellevue College's Radiology program, but found a new passion in culinary arts after being inspired by the exceptional dishes that Ronyai was putting out. Tran quickly pivoted career paths, and moved to the back of house where he worked his way up to a pastry chef position through Ronyai's mentorship. The two worked together at Mirabella for about five years.

Ronyai culinary background began in Budapest, Hungary, where he began an apprenticeship at the esteemed Hotel Gellert. After that he worked as a traveling chef for

various foreign embassies, hotels, and eventually taught at multiple well known culinary schools. During his time in Europe, Ronyai made connections with some of Europe's most renowned and recognized chefs. After moving to Canada and working in a few different cities, he and his family found a home on Bainbridge Island, where he was recognized for his culinary work at Mirabella by winning the WSCA title for Chef of the Year in 2014.

After being encouraged by Ronyai to apply to the 2014 Salon du Chocolate Seattle Competition, Tran entered and won, earning a seven-day trip to Paris. He was immersed in some of the most world-renowned chocolate and pastry shops, along with spending a couple of days learning at the Paul Bocuse Institute. Ronyai saw this trip as an opportunity to share some of his culinary connections, and met with Tran to guide him through Europe's culinary offerings.

It was in Belgium, studying the art of chocolate making under Stéphane Leroux, a world renowned chocolatier, where Tran and Ronyai were inspired to create a chocolate Belgian waffle and chocolate Liege waffle -- an idea that would soon become a local obsession.

In 2017, Tran and Ronyai began a business partnership when they opened L'Atilier TR on Bainbridge Island. Inspired by their love of creating quality food and their recent chocolatier experience, the two created a shop that would sell high quality, beautiful chocolates, delicious, novel chocolate waffles and authentic European pastries.

In February of 2022, Tran and Ronyai sold L'Atilier TR to an investor in the hopes that they could expand their business. A few months after acquiring L'Atilier TR, the investor sold it to the Crabtree Brands, the owners of Poulsbo businesses Chocmo, High Spirits and Crabtree Kitchen + Bar.

In January of 2023, Ronyai made the decision to retire, and Tran also retired shortly after. Within the first month of retirement, Ronyai received a phone call. A location he had scouted over a year prior in downtown Poulsbo was about to become available. Ronyai reached out to Tran, and the two formulated a new business idea: a patisserie and coffee shop.

Outside of the shop on the door, the initials TR written in Ronyai's handwriting can be seen, along with the words "Ma Façon" which is French for "My Way."

That way means a range from savory to sweet on the menu. Recent offerings have included breakfast treats like puff pastry stuff with pork sausage and gravy, or scotch eggs baked in puff pastry, all the way to pastries like bostock or shortbread, or the chefs' own twist on staples like brownies. And who knows what could be coming next.

"I decided I wanted to do things my way," Tran said. "I wanted to do things where I could be creative, and I missed the interactions with my customers."

Ma Façon TR is located at 18996 Front Street in Poulsbo, and open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday through Monday.