



COFFEE & CREPES CARY, N.C.

BY BRENDA PORTER-ROCKWELL

A funny thing happened on a walk through the plaza one day...

"We walked past the perfect location in an outdoor food court in a busy strip mall and we decided to get serious" about opening a coffeehouse, says Terri Pastrana, co-owner of Cary, N.C.-based Coffee & Crepes. That was 10 years ago.

Husband and co-owner Andres agrees, smiling but cautioning that, as with any major business decision, they had to weigh the pros and cons. Having been in the food business for the bulk of his professional career, mostly as a general manager for other big companies, Andres always wanted to own his own coffee shop.

But with such a big decision to commit to, "We ran the numbers and decided that it would be very difficult and risky to try make money on coffee alone," Terri explains. "To reduce our risk and make our shop stand out we decided to add a simple food item to the menu: crepes."

Visitors usually want either coffee or crepes, Terri says. Only about 10 percent of their customers actually order both. But it's their choice of coffee beans combined with their location in a busy strip mall anchored by a large movie theater and several well-known chain stores that keeps the store bustling.

"We are unique in suburbia-land. Starbucks is right across the street, so people have a choice. We use locally roasted Larry's Beans, a very flavorful and earth-friendly product. You can taste a huge difference," Terri says, advising any cafe owner to take advantage of their local resources to attract customers.

"Use a local roaster ... the coffee is fresher

and [the roaster] will market you locally and word will spread," Terri says.

While the crepes are a draw for the coffeehouse, the Pastranas say their coffee commands a large audience as well, thanks to the bean selection and marketing support from another Tar Heel state success story: Larry's Beans.

In their busy storefront, the Pastranas sell nine varieties of Larry's Beans; their brewed house blend is a Salvadoran medium roast, while the dark roast is pure Sumatra. And with a North Carolina address, it's practically mandated they include one of the state's most important crops: a Southern Pecan-flavored blend.

The drink menu also includes "the tastiest decaf from Peru, and Mighty Leaf teas. We get lots of repeat business for our creamy Big Train spiced chai tea made with steamed milk," Terri says.

Their line of frappes are made with real espresso shots with an ice cream base. The duo also make Island Oasis' all natural, real fruit smoothies and 14 different freshly made crepes.

The Pastranas, who are on site nearly every day, do not pick up full shifts at the cafe. Instead they rely on a staff of 14 part-timers. (The duo also run a catering business on the side with help from two staffers.) SCR

Fact Box

OWNERS:

ANDRES & TERRI PASTRANA

EQUIPMENT:

ASTORIA SAE2N ESPRESSO MACHINE
MAZER LUIGI AND SUPER
JOLLY GRINDERS
BUNN COFFEE MAKER

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Coffee & Crepes

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