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Couple's bakery brings New Orleans flavor to Bay Area

By **Yvette Orozco**, *STAFF WRITER*

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In their Webster bakery, Crescent City Connection owners Nicole and John Milian offer an array of

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Nicole Milian may have left New Orleans four years ago, but she held on to her love for the city.

With Crescent City Connection, which recently opened at 3126 FM 528 in Webster, Milian and her husband, John, want to share some Big Easy flavors and culture with their community.

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The bakery isn't just a splash of Cajun spices added here and there but a celebration of native New Orleans food life.

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“In New Orleans, if you get gumbo at one location, it’s not going to be the same down the street,” John Milian said.

Offering an array of baked goods including four variations of king cakes, six flavors of pralines and white chocolate bread pudding, Crescent City Connection has found its groove in the Bay Area.

Milian, who at one time worked in law enforcement and is originally from the Bronx, met his wife, an office manager, after relocating to New Orleans more than 10 years ago.

The couple moved to Webster in 2018.

“Like after any relocation, you start to miss home,” John Milian said.

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They started the bakery business from their own kitchen just before the pandemic.

“We were doing everything out of our home,” he said.

People would place orders and pick them up from the Milians’ residence or the baked goods would be delivered. By that August, the couple started taking their food to area farmers markets. The response was enthusiastic; so they began thinking bigger.

“Our business grew to the point that we began to explore our options,” said John Milian, 54. “We opened our doors on Sept. 22, and it’s been a blessing ever since. The area has welcomed us with open arms.”

Nicole Milian, 38, was born and raised in New Orleans, and the bakery reflects her roots.

"I hope to bring the Southern hospitality and the sweet confections the Big Easy is known for," she said.

"I missed the food, unique music and festivals, and I miss the feeling you get when walking downtown and taking in all the sights and sounds the Crescent City has to offer."

It didn't take long for John Milian to become attached to New Orleans once he moved there.

"Once I met my wife, I started learning about the city because we would venture out together and she taught me about the history," he said. "You get culture with the food, you get culture with the art and culture with the architecture, and various sections of the city have their own histories."

The couple's 1,250 square foot bakery has enough room to conjure up a distinct New Orleans atmosphere, Milian said.

“Our menu items will make you feel like you’re standing on the streets of New Orleans,” he said.

The pralines have their own section on the menu and come in chocolate, rum, peanut butter, coconut and traditional Creole, including one without nuts. The king cakes come with several filling options and as well as the traditional cinnamon.

Pies and cakes include red velvet, Italian cream and the New Orleans favorite, Chantilly cake, a white cake filled with fresh strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and blueberries and topped with a homemade cream cheese whipped icing.

And no bakery inspired by New Orleans would be complete without beignets, deep-fried pieces of dough sprinkled with powdered sugar, which Crescent City Connection serves fresh on the weekends.

While most of the items come from New Orleans recipes and traditions, the bakery can also customize and decorate desserts for special occasions and orders, including petit fours, cookie sandwiches and cookie cakes. One customer recently requested a half-moon cookie, an upstate New York staple.

“When people walk in the door, they’re going to hear the jazz and they’re always going to smell something baking,” Milian said.

The bakery features Mardi Gras-inspired color schemes in the furniture and countertops and wooden floors that conjure the feel of the some of the city’s historic homes.

“It’s extremely important to me to keep those ties to New Orleans,” Nicole Milian said. “The culture is so unique and it’s part of who I am as a person. My home is here in Texas now and I love it, but deep down I will always be a praline-eating, king cake-loving Saints fan.”

yorozco@hcnonline.com

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Yvette Orozco

REPORTER

Yvette Orozco is a reporter for the Houston Chronicle, covering the suburbs of Pearland, Pasadena and the Bay Area.

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