

keeping it in the family

When her parents wanted to retire, Kathy Batorowska stepped into the breach, assuming control of Heritage Bakery and Deli and its legion of loyal customers. *by John Gilchrist*

Where can you get a bag of hand-pinched sauerkraut-and-mushroom perogies and a debate on the merits of Alexander the Great on the side?

At Heritage Bakery and Deli, an outpost of fine Polish cuisine and Greek history. Kathy Batorowska, Heritage's owner, has a lifetime of Polish food experience and a degree in ancient history, with a specialization in Alexander. Together, these give her the perfect qualifications for whipping off 12,000 perogies every week (with the help of three other experienced perogie pinchers) while expounding on Alexander assassination theories.

As interesting as those theories are, the truth is, more folks come to Heritage for the food than for historical speculation. This is a busy place, especially at this time of year. Between Christmas, New Year's Eve, Orthodox Christmas and Orthodox New Year (today), it's been full speed ahead for Batorowska and her team for over a month. In fact, to satisfy the hunger for cabbage rolls—1,200 to 1,500 every week—Batorowska started stockpiling cabbages in September. She even called in her retired parents from Creston to help out in the crunch.

Not that her parents didn't enjoy it. They like coming back to Calgary and visiting with all their old customers. Andrew and Helen Batorowski founded Heritage Bakery and Deli in Ranchlands over 25 years ago, after emigrating from Poland in 1981. As the business grew, they moved to a spot on Centre Street North before settling in the Killarney-Glendale area in 1996. And when the couple wanted to retire a few years ago, Kathy, the third of four children, bought the business.

Batorowska had worked at Heritage since she was 12, alongside her sister and two brothers. But by the time her parents wanted to retire, her siblings had gone on to other ventures. She wanted the tradition to continue, so when she finished her studies she moved into the perogie and cabbage-roll business full time. Her sister Anna has since joined her as a baker.

Batorowska has kept many of her parents' recipes and traditions. She worked closely with Andrew and Helen during the transition period, learning



their techniques. Few of the recipes are written down, and many rely on feel and taste. So, while she doesn't bake her father's rye bread anymore, Kathy does have a couple of display cases filled with poppyseed strudel, Polish cottage-cheese cake, cream puffs, and scads of other rich baking made from his recipes. She also still makes her father's garlic sausage, saying that there would be riots if it were discontinued.

Heritage's clientele is as much Ukrainian as it is Polish (there's a whole bunch of non-Eastern European fans, too), so Batorowska makes a Ukrainian-style borscht and customizes her Polish dishes for the Ukrainian palate. But she says the differences between the two cuisines are not so much about the countries as they are about individual cooks and individual tastes.

Which brings us back to Alexander. Neither Poland nor Ukraine were ever conquered by The Great One. He died before he could turn his focus northwards. Maybe if he'd had some garlic sausage and a few perogies, he would have lived longer. **S**

Heritage Deli and Bakery: 1912 37th St. S.W., 403-686-6835, heritagebakeryanddeli.ca.

MAKING A MEAL OF IT
Heritage Deli and Bakery has 20 seats for those who want to dine in on perogies (10 varieties, including blueberry and the classic potato-and-onion), schnitzel, cabbage rolls and borscht. The seats are filled Monday through Saturday for breakfast and lunch, except during the Christmas-New Year season when breakfast goes on hiatus.