

# The Post and Courier

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Riaz Ahmed, a baker at Kossar's Bialys, sprinkles rounds of dough with onions before the bialys go into the oven.



Pat Fairhurst lends the brush of Guss' Pickles on Orchard Street.



Suleyman Yaguf, owner of breakfast Turkish Kebab House, slices meat from a house-made Doner kebab at the restaurant.



Mark Isreal, owner of The Doughnut Plant in New York City, displays a tray of his freshly baked bialys.

## BIG APPLE EA

BY TERESA TAYLOR  
Of The Post and Courier Staff

**N**EW YORK—THE 18, Krippy Kravitz. Maybe you thought you could go up North and put a speaking on doughnut makers. But KKV's business isn't looking so hot lately. So, who's crying now?

Not Mark Isreal, owner of The Doughnut Plant on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He just marked his 18th anniversary as a doughnut entrepreneur, and things couldn't be better. The wife is people off the street, as well as 41 stores in the city. He has two branches in Tokyo. Newspaper and magazine write-ups adorn the wall. Isreal and Martha are making down from the photo gallery.

There's nothing along or tight ahead his corporate digs on Grand Street. They make the doughnuts in the back -- about 1,200 a day -- but the front of the shop is a bit on the scruffy side. A couple of racks on a small

Hit the streets of New York City to find eclectic foods

counter display the daily goods. Today's offerings are vanilla bean, peanut butter, key lime, Valrhona chocolate, sticky buns and cinnamon loaves.

Isreal looks very laid back, with his head wrapped in a bandana, plaited style. It doesn't seem like an act when he greets customers with his easy smile or playfully lugs one of his bakers. "We're very south'ed here," he says.

There's a Southern feeling to this shop, an impression that turns out to be more than imagination. Isreal has family back in, of all places, South Carolina. His mother's side comes from the Upstate, around Chester. The

also has family roots in the grand South. A up in North Carolina for 25 of his 41 years.

As much as I've eaten his exaggerated South for the doughnuts. It's "I decided if I was go do the best," Isreal says out of three glazes, not Doughnuts have taken Vanilla bean to be hard to say why. The vanilla adds up from eating, and the flavor would be hard to pick trio. All taste true (1/4 Isreal points out). The balanced with the right Isreal says he uses it in his doughnuts, but it

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body really desires when they are a tourist: Experience the real stuff, go where the locals go. At the end of the day, I get to eat an elegant dinner prepared by a Charleston chef ... without ever leaving New York.

### BAKING BIALYS

Just a few steps away is another hell for the carb-counter: Kossar's Bialys. Here, the air is filled with the irresistible and savory smells of onion, garlic and baking bread. Bialys originally were baked in Bialystok, Poland. They made their way to New York with Jewish immigrants. Kossar's has been in business since 1927, the oldest bialy bakery in the United States.

But what is a bialy? It starts out as a small round of dough, in which a depression is made. Bits of onion are sprinkled into the well. Then they go into the oven. So what's the big deal?

The huge brick oven at Kossar's must work some kind of magic. The bialys often are called a cousin to the bagel, but they are really quite different. Whereas bagels are somewhat dense and chewy, bialys have some give and softness under a slightly crusty exterior. But like bagels, they go great with cream cheese and butter.

Riaz Ahmed is the baker today, in command of a giant, flour-dusted table, where he goes about his business with mesmerizing rhythm. He quickly tosses onion into the bialy wells, one at a time, row after row. He does 47 bialys in a minute.

Kossar's is a takeout place, but they also ship out their goods. In addition to bialys, Kossar's bakes bagels, bialy sticks, bulkas (same as bialys, different shape), garlic knots, pletzels (bialy dough baked flat), salt sticks and sesame sticks.

### WE SCREAM FOR GELATO

Isreal, the expatriate Southern gentleman, appears to escort me to my next stop: Il Laboratorio del Gelato on Orchard Street near the Tenement Museum.

Go inside and it looks like any other ice-cream shop, only smaller than most. Only 12 tubs of ice creams and sorbet are in the freezer case. Some are standards, such as mint chip and chocolate. But the "black sesame" flavor tells me something is extraordi-

nary about this place.

Indeed, ice-cream connoisseurs might find the holy grail in Il Laboratorio. Owner Jon Snyder is like a scientist, constantly experimenting to come up with new flavors. He's developed more than 100 since opening two years ago.

These include herb-infused mixes such as rosemary, tarragon pink pepper and lemon verbena. Unusual fruit varieties such as black mission fig, cantaloupe and red plum. Nuts run the gamut — chestnut, hazelnut, walnut, pistachio, toasted almond, bourbon pecan. Even rice, green tea or ginger for those with an Asian craving.



Snyder

Snyder fell in love with gelato in Italy, so he imported the method and added finesse. Gelato is lower in butterfat and somewhat denser than the typical American ice cream. It's smooth and velvety on the tongue, not cloying like some premium American ice creams.

While you might become starry-eyed over the gelatos, don't overlook Snyder's sorbets. They are 80 percent to 95 percent fresh fruit, which he says sets them apart from others. He tries to use local and organic sources whenever possible. From blood orange to black currant to green apple, it's clear that Snyder thinks out of the box.

Snyder got into the ice-cream business in 1983 when he was only 19. He built up the Ciao Bella brand, which he sold in 1989 when he decided to change careers. (He says Ciao Bella is now sold in 40 states, from New York to California.) He went back to school, got his MBA and became a trader on Wall Street. "I never really found my calling down there," he says. "I was never really happy."

### PICK A PICKLE

If you're pregnant and having a yen for both ice cream and pickles, you're in luck. Less than a block away, Pat Fairhurst is rolling out 16 big barrels onto the sidewalk. I might look slightly pregnant, but I'm not — just hungry for adventure.

Fairhurst is co-owner of Guss'