hMAG LIFESTYLE

Bon Appétit: Choc O Pain Represents Le French Week in Hoboken

in Events, hNOW

by Darren Paltrowitz

As a Hoboken resident, you are likely accustomed to hearing non-residents talk up the cultural diversity and interesting activities offered across the Hudson in Manhattan. But we locals know that there is plenty of interesting and authentic international fare to be found in town, and plenty of events to brag about. Running from July 6 through 14, Le French Week New Jersey brings us "all things French" in a variety of locations in the area. Representing Hoboken (and Jersey City) is Choc O Pain French Bakery & Café at 157 1st Street.

Choc O Pain proprietor Clemence Danko kindly took the time to answer some questions—not only about her successful and quality-oriented business' involvement in Le French Week, but also being French in Hoboken.

Having only moved to Hoboken in 2009, Clemence came into the food world out of passion; she previously worked within the pharmaceutical field. As proof of her undeniable work ethic, she was honored with the International Culinary Center's Outstanding Alumni Award for Excellence in Bread Baking in April 2015. Keeping business local, a production-only facility is expected to open later this year in Jersey City.

hMAG: What do you wish more people knew about Choc O Pain?
Choc O Pain's Clemence Danko: I wish more people knew about us, our authenticity, our artisan products freshly baked, our lunch options…

H: Do you have a favorite item on the Choc O Pain menu?
C: Our chocolate roll, without hesitation. I can eat that every day, my kids, too.

H: Choc O Pain is involved with this year's Le French Week New Jersey. How would you describe that event?
C: This event was meant to take the opportunity to celebrate Bastille Day in New Jersey — many events already happen every year in Manhattan and Brooklyn. It's an opportunity to celebrate French culture, in our case through its best medium, the food!

H: What do you hope to accomplish with your involvement in Le French Week New Jersey?

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C: We thought it would be a great opportunity to expand awareness of French language and culture by holding events at Choc O Pain. Of course, we also hope more potential customers will come in the store and try our products during the different tastings and realize how great they are!

H: People craving Japanese goods can go to Mitsuwa in Edgewater. For those seeking Korean food and other items, there is Hannam in Fort Lee. Is there a French equivalent anywhere in the area?
C: Recently, Le District opened in lower Manhattan, this is an equivalent to Eataly, but "à la française."

H: How did you wind up working with food after so many years in the pharmaceutical industry ?
C: I was always passionate by food—I love cooking, having friends over and I knew I would change my career for a move in the food industry, although I didn't know what precisely. My husband found the idea of the bread when we moved here and he encouraged me to dig deeper into it, that's how it all started.

H: How did you reach the decision to open Choc O Pain in Hoboken and Jersey City, of all places?
C: We were living in Hoboken when I started building my business plan. I had initially imagined opening my bakery in Manhattan, but I quickly realized Hoboken had a huge potential. Jersey City came as a coincidence really, and it was a great move, I am so blessed it came my way.

H: Do you have a favorite restaurant in town?
C: I love Brasserie de Paris (in the Sky Club on 1st Street & Harrison), they are serving truly authentic French food. I love Sri Thai as well, on the other side of the spectrum.

H: What is your favorite thing about Hoboken?
C: I love Hoboken—for the walkability, accessibility to every spot in town, a lot of diversity within a square mile. It's pretty amazing.
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Merci beaucoup, Clemence.
Choc O Pain
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http://www.facebook.com/chocopainbakery

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