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Lady takes the crepe

Professional crepe-maker has a following in Seal Beach

By ASHLEY MAJESKI

SPECIAL TO WESTSIDE WEEKLY

The Crepe Lady, Shannah Holt, makes sweet and savory crepes from a mobile cooking station.

RYAN HODGSON-RIGSBEE, WESTSIDE WEEKLY THE CREPE LADY

Shannah Holt

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At Bogart's Coffee House, 905 Ocean Ave., Seal Beach: 8 a.m. to noon, Saturdays

SEAL BEACH – Every Saturday morning, Shannah Holt wakes up early, gathers her tools and heads down to Bogart's Coffee House in Seal Beach. Once she gets there, however, she answers to a different name:

The Crepe Lady.

The crepe, a thin pancake that can be stuffed with anything from fruit and whipped cream to meat and cheese, is Holt's specialty, and the people of Seal Beach have taken a liking to her version of the French dish.

"Shannah has people that follow her," said JoAnn Adams, owner of Bogart's Coffee House. "Having her here helps us both out."

Holt, who lives in Seal Beach, said she got the idea of starting a crepe business after a trip to France in 1997.

"I've always been the person who likes to have everyone over and cook for them," said Holt, who had been working as a human resources manager for a medical company. "I knew I wanted to start a business, but I wanted to do something different."

In summer 2004, Holt took her crepes to the Redondo Beach Lobster Festival and was overwhelmed by the reaction.

"I had such a positive response," Holt said. "The line was about a half hour long."

It was after the festival that Holt decided to become more serious about making crepes. She flew to France again and was trained by authentic crepe-makers about how to make crepes and how to run a specialty-food business.

After taking her skills back to the United States, Holt realized that she had found a niche. She now runs a full-time catering business that features a full menu.

Still, Holt said, crepes are her mainstay. Currently, she has five crepe-makers on call that she has trained to help her with events. She frequently caters weddings, corporate lunches and television sets for shows such as "Bones" and "Crossing Jordan."

She does, however, always make a stop at Bogart's in Seal Beach from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturdays to serve her crepes to eager coffeehouse patrons.

Holt said she chose Bogart's because of its warm vibe.

"If you come here on a regular basis, people actually know your name," Holt said.

Using a device she calls the "Batter Boss," which squeezes out the perfect amount of batter to make a crepe, Holt said she can make a crepe in about two minutes, allowing her customers to watch her as she works.

"Half the fun is watching," she said. "It's kind of like a show."

Holt said that while she does have plans to start wholesaling her crepe mix sometime this year, she is content with the way her business is going right now.

"It's been a good time," Holt said. "It's fun meeting people's request. You never know what they're going to be."



HOW TO MAKE A DESSERT CREPE

Mix flour, eggs, water and milk together. Pour mix onto crepe griddle, using a crepe spatula to roll it out flat. Let cook for 45 seconds before turning crepe over. Let cook for 30 seconds, then fold crepe in half. Add fruits onto one corner, then fold crepe into a triangle. Remove crepe from griddle. Finish by adding sauces and whipped cream.