
BEHIND THE SCENES WITH

NICOLE BUJEWSKI



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Shake Rag Alley has a new series of culinary classes this season! We recently had a chance to sit down with instructor, Nicole Bujewski, and find out a bit about her.

Q: Nicole, I’ve read that you relocated to Mineral Point from Chicago, where you had quite a career, owning a bakery and working at The French Pastry School. What impelled you to come to southwestern Wisconsin?

A: In a word: Spensley Farm. More on that in a minute. My husband, Steven, and I had wanted to move from Chicago for years, but we had our professions and lots of connections – and were caretakers for a cherished friend (and well-loved Scoutmaster of Steven’s), and just couldn’t leave him. When he passed, we knew it was time for a change – a big move, not just heading for the suburbs. After being terribly disappointed by visiting a property we thought would be ideal, we saw a listing for a 17-acre property in Mineral Point and had a good feeling about it. When we came up the pine-lined drive to the 1850’s stone farmhouse, we knew it was for us. We have big plans for the historic Spensley Farm! You might visit our website, spensleyfarm.com, to take a peek at some ideas we are looking to develop.

Q: Are you still involved with anything related to French pastry?

A: As you can imagine, the pandemic has inspired a lot of people – including me – to work remotely. Having taught in person for many years, I’m now the instructional content director of The Butter Book, which is an online educational portal of the French Pastry School. We have a partnership with Rouxbe, an online culinary school out of Seattle, so I’m doing some things with them. Once a teacher, always a teacher! And of course, I’m baking!

Q: Your series of mostly breadmaking workshops at Shake Rag Alley is a new adventure for us. How did you decide to approach Shake Rag? (I understand your first workshop is sold out!)

A: I love Shake Rag Alley. Steven and I have taken many classes there. I wanted to make a contribution and be part of Shake Rag, in part as a way to find a niche in Mineral Point. It felt like a good way to approach the community. And as for bread, you may know that in 2020, more people baked sourdough bread than ever before. They learned it is a labor of love. I must say, the tricky thing about offering a two-hour baking class is timing! You can't just tell the bread dough to hurry up and rise, so I'm going to be doing a lot of staging.

Q: You have been seen at the Mineral Point Market on Saturday mornings. What delectables are you offering there?

A: Right, I'm at the market two times a month. I bring a variety of French pastries – different varieties of tarts and breads. I'll be switching menus monthly, since I use seasonal and local fruits and vegetables, like my savory tomato-onion combination. I also have the basics available, like chocolate chip or oatmeal cherry cookies.

Q: And for those who can't get to the Market, are there other ways to buy your products?

A: Yes, I'll be extending beyond the market season by offering online pre-orders.

Q: What's your absolutely favorite thing to make? Why?

A: Everyone asks me that! And the answer always is: It changes all the time. That's how you grow as a professional, right? I love all areas of baking and pastry. I like to master an area, then move to the next. I always enjoy making tarts and savory pastries, but right now, I'm working on developing my bread making techniques and recipe.

Q: Does your dog fetch, or do other tricks?

A: Oh, you mean Ruby, our yellow lab! She's our first dog. I just had to make the farm-dog connection. She's only 7 weeks old, so what she's best at right now is following me around ... or maybe she's even better at being the center of attention at the market!

