

A Passion For Business

Sweet Grass

Heather Larson has a simple answer when asked why she puts so much time and dedication into Sweet Grass, her bakery/eatery located on Main Street in Wessington Springs: “Because I love it.”

If pressed as to what she loves about it, she matter-of-factly states: “Everything. It’s my baby from the ground up.”

A lifetime love of food and its wildly abundant flavor possibilities, Larson said that her fascination with creating dishes that “wow” began early.

“My mom worked full time and my two sisters and I did the cooking,” she said. “That’s where my love of food developed.”

The decision to open her restaurant arrived when she was at a crossroads with her former career as a Field Extension Specialist for SDSU Extension.

“I had to get my masters degree to continue in my position,” she explained, adding that she had been catering a variety of events from her house outside of regular work hours in the ag industry. “Instead of reading about animals, I was reading cookbooks. So instead of going to Brookings I opened a restaurant.”

Larson said that her “unique knack” of looking at ingredients in a recipe and recreating and improving upon it has been the secret to her success.

“I’m always making sure it’s at the next level,” she said, gesturing to her three by five foot spice wall. “If it doesn’t scream amazing, I don’t do it.”

She said that her experience and knowledge in the cattle industry helps her customize the dining experience for customers seeking a good steak.

“If a customer likes their steak prepared a certain way, we can help guide them. For instance if someone orders a sirloin well done, we will help steer them towards a different cut that will better accommodate that level of doneness.”

In addition to the cuisine offered at Sweet Grass, Larson said ambiance and curb appeal also help elevate her customers’ experiences.

“When we first bought the building it was dark and dirty with drop ceilings everywhere. The floors were heaved and the whole front wall needed to be redone,” she remembers, looking incredulously at the now-lovingly restored, more-than 100-year-old building. “My sister in law looked at me and asked, ‘Are you sure?’”

With the dining portion of the building fully restored and a menu she has put her heart and soul into, she has achieved what she set out to bring to Wessington Springs from the start: “an upscale atmosphere with high quality, made-from-scratch cooking.”

As for the future of her restaurant, Larson’s vision is to make Sweet Grass a destination point to draw visitors to Wessington Springs.

“I’d love for my restaurant to bring people to town — then they can stay in Springs and take in all that we have to offer.”

