

New Lakewood bakery offers Argentinian tea & pastries filled with dulce de leche

BY [KRISTINE SHERRED](#) JANUARY 27, 2020 11:15



Sur Bakery opened with Argentinian delights in September 2019. The owners import flours, snacks, coffee and mate — the tea to make Argentina’s national drink. BY [JOSHUA BESSEX](#) | [KRISTINE SHERRED](#)

Argentinian sweets honor dulce de leche, rich in color and flavor, spread between velvety cookies and squeezed inside crispy, flaky pastry cones. The caramel confection gets drizzled on facturas, a brioche-like pastry enjoyed with coffee at breakfast or with a cup of mate in the afternoon. It comes layered in torta de hojas, inspired by the French mille-feuille.

The national cookie, alfajores, sandwiches the decadent sauce between two circular shortbreads made with cornstarch (maicena in Spanish), which lends a powder-soft texture that melts onto your tongue. Tiny coconut flakes stick to the caramel, and the result at Sur is a not-too-sweet treat that erases any semblance of buttery guilt.

You can find Argentina’s prized cookie (\$1 each) — and really any essential treat from the South American nation — at Sur Bakery in Lakewood.

Nestled on the corner of a truly multicultural plaza, Sur neighbors [Cham Garden Korean BBQ](#), [Paraiso Filipino Native Foods](#) and [La Casa del Sharon](#), a Mexican cafe. Owner Osvaldo Lahoz had long wanted to open a bakery after running a restaurant in southern California for several years. He moved to the Tacoma area to be closer to family and also works for a local charter school.

“I’m tired of restaurants,” said Lahoz when I asked him why he turned to baking. That, and he comes from a family of bakers, whose commercial bakery sold croissants, various pastries and pizza to businesses and schools throughout Buenos Aires, Argentina’s capital city and largest metropolitan area.

In the United States, most of the 242,000 or so Argentine immigrants and descendants live in either Florida or California, [according to a 2011 Pew Research Center survey](#). Nearly 40% live in the South and a third in the western United States.

IN SEARCH OF MATE

Since Lahoz opened Sur in October 2019, the location at 10518 South Tacoma Way has proven to be serendipitous for Argentinian expats yearning for a taste of home.

For one, it's near Interstate 5, and his customers have flocked from across the state to get their hands on authentic pastries, empanadas and breads. They have likewise bombarded the selection of Argentinian imports Lahoz has committed to stock: Sidra Real, a quintessential cider; Quilmes, the go-to beer founded by a German immigrant to Buenos Aires in 1888; and several brands of mate, the earthy green tea reputed for its medicinal benefits.

The Argentine community here was "desperate" for mate, said Lahoz's business partner Elena Danoviz. Most importers are based in California or Florida, she said, and Latin American grocers lean toward Mexican and Central American goods.

Sur compensates for that dearth by stocking several brands and styles, some more bitter or more finely ground than others, as well as the traditional gourd-shaped cups and thermoses for mate on the go.

Inherited through native custom, mate grows readily in the subtropics of northern Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay — where it is also the national drink. It is served with a flat-tipped metal straw for sipping the steeped tea from the bottom of the cup, the leaves floating at the top. Traditionally, the cup is refilled several times as it's passed around a circle of friends and family.

"It's such a social thing," said Danoviz.

That spirit of sharing means you'll have to buy a bag to try for yourself at home, but Lahoz and Danoviz will kindly guide you in choosing the right mate for your tastes.

PASTRY FOR THE PEOPLE

The earthy tea no doubt complements the subtle sweetness of the bakery's facturas, stored in a serve-yourself case by the shop window. Facturas, which translates to "invoice" but in Latin means "to create," refers to any type of pastry, but here they are specific to Sur's Danish-like goodies. Try one drizzled with chocolate and spotted with crema pastelera (pastry cream) or raspberry jam.

The main case reveals the breadth of what Danoviz can do with the ovens of former tenant Inay's, a Filipino bakery.

There are smiling Argentine cookies (\$1 each) filled with jam that look simple but surprise in their nuance, hefty meringues and tarte dulce de leche y coco (coconut and caramel tarts) — the latter a steal at \$1.50 for a small or \$5 for a large.

Then there are the iconic cañoncitos: a spiraled, cannon-shaped flaky pastry filled, of course, with dulce de leche.

"Caramel is the main ingredient in most pastries — we love caramel in Argentina," said Danoviz.

Though technique stems from Spanish, Italian and French influence, Argentine pastries have intriguing names, rooted in a 19th-century labor movement. Cañoncitos means "little cannons," and libritos are "little books" of intricate layers of puffed pastry folded so that when baked, they resemble a petite, if misshapen, book.

If you can snag a librito fresh from the oven, you'll wonder if Pillsbury fleeced Lahoz's family and called it a Crescent Roll.

Little at Sur is sugary-sweet, as recipes call for more butter and less sugar than your ho-hum American baked good. For savory palates, there are [empanadas](#) and, notably, pan de miga (\$6 per loaf).

Sometimes known as English bread and translated to “crumb bread,” the perfectly squared-off loaf is baked in a special metal pan with a lid. It must rise to just the right level on all sides of the pan so the thin crust can be easily sliced off on all sides. It ain’t no Wonder Bread.

“It looks like white bread,” explained Lahoz, but “it’s hard to make.” It’s drier than the commercial American loaves that stick to the roof of your mouth. The crust-less slices take well to a panini press or toaster oven.

Say yes to a sandwich de miga layered with ham and provolone or call ahead to order a custom creation.

Lahoz and Danoviz said the bakery has already become a gathering place for the Argentine community — one guest was familiarly welcomed by name during my visit — but their ultimate goal is to introduce their favorite bites to other cultures: “We want to introduce that to the rest of the people.” Someday, that could entail a low-key cafe with tables and chairs in the now-vacant space next door.

[SUR ARGENTINE BAKERY](#)

- 10518 S. Tacoma Way, Suite A, 253-267-2771
- Hours: Tuesday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.



Elena Danoviz and Osvaldo Lahoz bring their Argentinian roots to Sur Bakery in Lakewood. KRISTINE SHERRED | [KRISTINE SHERRED](#) | [THE NEWS TRIBUNE](#) [KRISTINE SHERRED 253-597-8270](#) Kristine Shered joined The News Tribune in December 2019. She spent the past decade immersed in the culinary scene of Chicago and, for a time, covered the global chocolate and snacks industries. An avid home cook and beer/cocktail pro, she now explores all things edible and sippable throughout Pierce County. Reach her also at [@krisrarasher](#) on Twitter.