

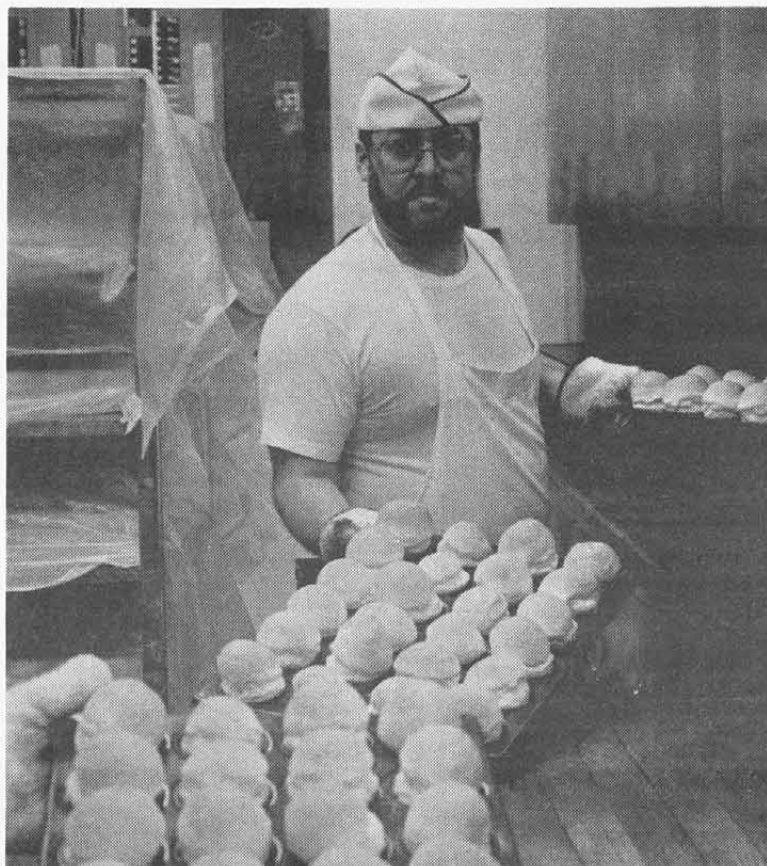
# Aucoin's Bakery celebrates 35th year with expansion to facilities

Among the drab news of layoffs and closures in Inverness County one of the quiet success stories has been Aucoin's Bakery in Petit Etang. Started by Alex Aucoin in 1959, within a year the bakery was expanding to the demand for its products throughout the northern and central county. This week, marking its 35th anniversary with an open house, Leonard Aucoin was showing the public the bakery's latest acquisition, an oven capable of baking 250 loaves of bread at a time.

When Alex Aucoin began, it was to feed a local demand for baked goods. The baking was done in the morning, and in the afternoon Alex Aucoin drove the truck, delivering what he and his wife, Ann Blanche, had baked to his customers. By 1960, the bakery's reputation had spread and family owned operation required a 24' X 24' expansion. It also required a new oven, one capable of baking 155 loaves at a time. In 1959, only two people were working at the bakery. By 1960, the number doubled to four, including a truck driver.

The line of products offered by Aucoin's Bakery included rolls, white bread, wholewheat and raisin bread and donuts.

In 1986, Alex Aucoin was planning to retire. During the same period, his son Leonard and daughter-in-law Pauline, who had been agents for Imperial Oil, began looking for another way to earn a living when Imperial Oil changed



Leonard Aucoin takes fresh buns from the new oven recently installed at Aucoin's Bakery. The oven will bake 250 loaves of bread at a time.

the rules for its agents, requiring them to buy the product and re-sell at a profit rather than selling on commission. Leonard Aucoin estimates that the couple would

have needed \$150,000 or \$175,000 just to be able to keep their roles as agents for the oil company. They began looking for other opportunities. They gave Alex

Aucoin a proposal for purchasing the business.

"I knew what I was getting into," Leonard Aucoin, who is now the company president, said. "I used to work here every summer." He and Pauline and his sister, Yvette LeLievre, took ownership of the family business in 1987.

Same family, new ideas. In 1987, delivery of the products reached as far as Port Hood where it has remained to this day. New product lines were introduced.

"We added muffins, biscuits, cinnamon rolls and oat bran bread," Leonard Aucoin says. In addition, new equipment has been purchased. "In 1987, everything

was done by hand. Almost a hundred pounds of dough was mixed then cut into small, one half pound balls. Two ladies were doing that all day. It was the same for the rolls."

Now, Aucoin's Bakery is equipped with spiral mixer and bread divider which saves the company about two hours a day, and has allowed the expanded line of products to be introduced. Last year, meat pies were added to the line. The workforce also grew. Nine people are now employed, four full time, two part time regular, and three students. All

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Pauline and Anita Aucoin preparing bread.

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(L to R) Leonard Aucoin, Alex Aucoin, Annie Blanche Aucoin, Pauline Aucoin, and Yvette Aucoin.

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# Aucoin's...

year, two students are employed. The third joins the bakery for the summer.

Over the past 35 years, only one face has remained constant in the bakery, that of Leonard and Yvette's mother, Annie Blanche who continues to work along side her children today as she did alongside her husband 35 years ago.

Along with baking for the public, Aucoin's Bakery also has several clients who place special orders, restaurants and institutions.

Although the truck travels the coastline of Inverness County from Cheticamp to Port Hood, stocking shelves in all the larger stores, the bakery still does 20%-25% of its business at its own outlet in the bakery.

There have been requests for the company to deliver as far as Sydney and Halifax, but the Aucoin's have resisted that temptation. It would require an expansion too large to interest the family.

Adding the new oven this year which has almost doubled the bakery's capacity, was a major step forward in staying competitive. It was purchased, Aucoin said, with assistance from ACOA and ECBC.

"A good staff has been the key to our success," Leonard Aucoin said. "We have always had employees who worked hard."

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