Rochester, NY — News of a change of ownership prompts the phrase "an exciting new era, with continued tastes and traditions" for Malek's Bakery in Brighton.  On Sunday, the new Malek's Bakery owners addressed the purchase and their transition plan for the first time. The Board President, Mr. Arie Schochat, and Head of Hillel Community Day School, Dr. Tracie Glazer, talked about their vision for the Bakery and why Hillel School needed to be the new steward of the famed Brighton bakery.

**Hillel Community Day School becoming the new owner is "the perfect fit," said former owners, Mr. Hoang Ngo and Ms. Lea Malek**

Former owner and current landlord, Ms. Lea Malek, and recently retired owner, Mr. Hoang Ngo, describe the partnership of Malek's Bakery and Hillel Community Day School as "the perfect fit."  Hillel School, they both said, has a deep love for the Bakery and wants to see Malek's and Brighton's communities continue to improve and grow.

Hillel Community Day School has a wealth of experience running professional food services. They run a full-service, kosher, rabbinically overseen food operation for their students, staff, and families. The school has been serving the Jewish families of the Greater Rochester area for over 74 years and will be celebrating its 75th year as a school next September.

Hillel School's Board President, Mr. Arie Schochat, said there was never any consideration to allow the Bakery to close, change its kashrut oversight, or move.

*"We were committed from the very beginning that this 44-year-old bakery and all the recipes and traditions surrounding it would stay in Brighton,"* Schochat said.

Schochat said he has always been a big fan of kosher baked goods, but his love for the Bakery's specific offerings grew when he moved from Woodbridge, Connecticut, to Rochester. He currently serves as both a dad and husband of locally born individuals and Board President of Hillel School. Schochat says he has been impressed with the challah, babka, seven-layer cake, and Shabbos-friendly service provided by the Bakery over the years. Therefore, he wanted Hillel School to be a part of its continuation as the most recent owners sought to retire.

*"The reality is that when I moved to Rochester over a decade ago, one of the first things that I sought out to discover was where to grab the best cookies and danish,"* said Schochat.

**Ngo was looking for someone anchored in Brighton**

Many prospects looking to acquire the Bakery asking to enter into possible ownership discussions did not feel quite right to the recent owner, Mr. Hoang Ngo. He wanted to form a partnership with someone anchored in Brighton, who would commit to keeping the traditions of the Bakery before arranging to sell the business.

"I'm *selling, but I'm not closing,"* said Hoang Ngo, who has owned the Bakery for the past ten years. *"I can't abandon a good business."*

People are often surprised to find that the owner of a kosher bakery is not Jewish, said Ngo, who is a refugee from Vietnam of Chinese heritage. He is a *"true boat person,"* he said, in that he wasn't evacuated by plane.

He was a baker for McCurdy's for 17 years before becoming head baker at Malek's. While working at the kosher Bakery, he jumped on the opportunity to buy the business from its previous owners. He bakes the recipes passed down from Lea Malek, who founded the Bakery in 1977.

Among the recipes is her made from scratch hamantaschen, which are tender, triangular shortbread cookies made with an assortment of fillings. The Bakery sells thousands of them around the Jewish holiday of Purim, Ngo said.

*"It was about the right market and the right partner who would keep the bakery kosher and thriving,"* offered Ngo.

That's how Hillel School's Head of School, Dr. Tracie Glazer, came into the picture.  Glazer and Ngo got to know each other through transactions involving weekly challahs and kosher baked goods for the students, between the Bakery and the school, and they both say they were encouraged to form a partnership by their friends and peers. Glazer said the school had been interested in Malek's continuity for a long time. Still, fear of managing multiple community organizations, managing a second board for the Bakery, and being able to honor the Bakery's uniqueness and history prevented the school from forming a partnership with Malek's until recently.

*"Our board of trustees took a look at Malek's a year ago,"* Glazer said. *"And ten months later, we are finally under contract with the Malek's family for the Bakery's real estate and Mr. Ngo for the business. So, we have been a little busy with running a school during a pandemic and planning for the Bakery's transition, but our love for what Malek's brings to this community and the town of Brighton has not wavered, at all."*

Hillel School's President, Mr. Schochat, says he's excited to have Hillel School and the local Jewish community footprint and history expand with emerging connections to the Bakery and more community institutions and organizations. Analysts, such as consultant Mrs. Lori Field, say having two popular institutions in one area owned by the same organization can expand services and offerings, ensuring the ultimate sustainability of both.

*"Jewish foods, such as Challah and hamantaschen, are about bringing people together, and we are excited about doing that in a world where it seems like everything takes us apart,"* Mrs. Field said.

There are still a lot of questions about how the Bakery will ultimately be led. Will the new Hillel School ownership increase breakfast, beverages, and lunch to attract more customers?  Will there be significant changes to the Bakery's management and hours?  Glazer says it's too soon to answer all of those questions, but they have a good transition team in place. *"Mr. Ngo and his current staff have agreed to stay on to help us through the first four or more months of the Bakery's transition, Ms. Malek and her family have agreed to help us learn all about the traditional recipes and history of the Bakery, and the Town of Brighton's officials have been incredibly supportive and helpful. With the help of Mrs. Field and this amazing team of community leaders, I don't see much changing for the first few months of operations. I also recognize that some things, like the secret-ingredient pareve brownies, perfect challah rolls, chocolate babka, and seven-layer cake, can never change, which is why the school had to come in and save this iconic Bakery from closing!"*

Glazer said she is working with Mr. Ngo and Mrs. Field to keep the same favorites regulars to Malek's Bakery have come to expect. Malek's plans to expand its online and social media presence, including having some menu items available for pre-order and payment through its website as well. Glazer said that customers can rest assured that the Bakery will still offer a variety of freshly baked cakes and other treats.

*"The same bakers are doing our baking that were here before, and they are training our new, but veteran, Executive Baker, Mr. Thomas Quinn,"* Glazer said. *"Our amazing baking team will make everything with the same quality and taste our community desires, and they will ensure that everything is homemade with quality ingredients, like Malek's famous cow cookies. They are remarkable, and the only thing that we may have to consider about them is that we may just have to add in a Buffalo version as we get closer to the Super Bowl. As a K-8 school principal and local leader who roots for another NFL team, I do love and know my audience!"* Glazer quipped.

"We're *going to try to experiment some new specialty items and re-expand to our pre-Covid hours once we get our feet under us and figure things out this first month of operation,"* Glazer noted. *"We're limiting hours for our first few weeks of business as we try to renovate the baking area and replace certain equipment. We are figuring out the best way to ensure that the community's absolute needs, such as Shabbos Challah and kosher birthday cakes, are met during that time while also making things a little more energy-efficient, eco-conscious, and up-to-date."*

*"We're the same Malek's Bakery; we're just under new ownership,"* Glazer said.
*"We know we have big shoes to fill with Mr. Hoang Noa retiring, especially with Ms. Malek standing alongside in partnership with us during the transition, and I'm hoping we can ease in and keep the Bakery going as positively and excitedly as we can. We truly want to take this next month to get everything rolling better than ever as we experiment with new offerings, new register systems, and tweak things a little bit."*

Friendly staffers greet customers with a smile at Malek's Bakery. However, Glazer and Field said they'd like to hire more.

*"We are so excited that most of the current employees are going to stay with us to keep things rolling,"* Field said. *"However, we are still looking for some counter helpers, night bakers, and even a delivery driver/cleaning person to join our team."*

Glazer said the Bakery is a historic property that needs to honor its past and that she sees the relationship with Brighton's town officials as one of partnership and promise.

"*We are so blessed to be working with such an incredible town and its leadership. Malek's building was once the Brighton Town's offices and even has the old jail holding cell in the basement,"* Glazer said. *"After working with our amazing consultant, Lori Field, and the Brighton Town's supervisor, planning team, and historic board personnel, we are walking into the iconic Monroe Ave building with hope and mutual excitement about the possibilities for the future."*

"*We are going to be updating and changing some of the equipment, and adding some new beverages, such as a nitro cold brew coffee and craft iced tea drinks and making the Bakery's hours a bit more convenient for Shabbat observant individuals who also work 9 to 5 jobs,"* Glazer added. *"We're not changing too much, though. We don't want to throw people off or go too 'Avant-Garde on them,"* she said with a smile.

*"Check out our website at* [*www.maleksbakery.com*](http://www.maleksbakery.com)*, or join our Facebook and Instagram pages to see our limited hours and menus over the next few weeks. Better yet, come on in and see us or reach out. Let us know your thoughts and opinions of what needs to change and what needs to stay the same,"* Field said.

Malek's Bakery is located at 1795 Monroe Avenue in Brighton and will have limited hours on Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays from 7:00 am until 3:00 pm until they fully reopen on February 15, 2022.