

Happy Girl Kitchen: Unique Private Events With an Edge

One might not know it walking into Happy Girl Kitchen, the fearlessly alternative café and cannery that prides itself on being a local leader in organic food and grocery, but the business is actually steeped in local history and tradition, with a twist, of course.

It is tucked away on the quiet end of the Central Avenue business district in Pacific Grove, but the restaurant run by owner-operators Todd and Jordan Champagne is both a product of and forger of the Monterey Peninsula's unique history. The couple have run their business out of their 173 Central Avenue location for nine years. Before that, they were a mobile unit, gracing farmers markets with a veritable smorgasbord of preserved organic foods.

The sprawling space is the former home of the Granary, a natural health foods store and bakery with a devoted following that closed in the late 1990s. Happy Girl Kitchen could be described in similar terms with its full-service bakery and café offering a variety of organic baked goods and gluten-free options, and its wall to wall selections of organic, preserved foods. The restaurant has marshalled its own unique following over the years serving as a hub for devotees of local, organic and alternative foods. But the history goes deeper. The space is also a cannery, the only one in the area, making Happy Girl a local leader in food preservation and carrying on a Peninsula industry long after the last area cannery closed in 1973.

However, you won't find sardines at Happy Girl. Instead, a quick perusal of the shelves will introduce the intrepid buyer to the Champagne's bread and butter, dozens of custom canned goods. Among the offerings are salsas, raw honeys, marmalades, and spreads, along with preserved pickles, heirloom tomatoes with basil and other vegetables. The products are wonderful, but they are only appetizers to the main meal at Happy Girl.



The restaurant and cannery also serves as an amazing private event space. The staff, led by Jordan and Todd, often hosts parties, team building groups, kids camps and tour groups for private events in which participants are served meals they take a hand in preparing themselves. These are most commonly dinner events which can accommodate seating for up to 55 people within the restaurant space. Prep tables are moved to the periphery, pristine white tablecloths and twinkling silverware are laid out with tasteful floral centerpieces and suddenly the dining room looks less like a kitchen and more like a dining hall at Spanish Bay or Asilomar. Customers can partake in the prep themselves if they like, something Jordan encourages, to better connect with the meal guests are about to eat.

“People like that they can get the whole space in a casual setting with a farm-to-table experience,” Jordan says. “Our customers become our friends, they love the experience and at the end, we're hugging them goodbye and hearing about how much fun they had.”

Happy Girl Kitchen is located at 173 Central Avenue in Pacific Grove and is open daily from 7:30a.m. – 5:00p.m. with the dinners available by appointment. Visit them online at www.happygirlkitchen.com or call at (831) 373-4475.