



# UP IN THE MORNING, UP ALL NIGHT

PASSION FUELS HUCKLEBERRY IN SANTA MONICA

Josh Loeb and Zoe Nathan grew up miles apart in Santa Monica, and she was friends with his brother in high school, but they didn't meet until 2007, when she began baking for Loeb at Rustic Canyon Wine Bar and Seasonal Kitchen. In the past two years, they've made up for lost time, helping the market-driven Santa Monica restaurant achieve destination status, getting married and opening the Huckleberry Bakery & Café, which specializes in seasonal comfort food.

Loeb envisioned Huckleberry as “an everything place” that allows customers to grab a morning pastry, breakfast, lunch, after-school snack, coffee, dessert or takeout dinner. “The kind of place that we wanted was a place that could serve all of our needs,” he says.

As for the name, “We always wanted to name our first son Huckleberry,” says Loeb. “This is our first son,” adds Nathan. “We’re up in the morning with it, we’re up all night with it.” Nathan typically arrives at Huckleberry by 4 a.m. to bake and experiment. Loeb shows up by 6 a.m., “when the chaos starts.”

Loeb and Nathan met architect David Montalba at a neighborhood barbecue. The Rustic Canyon regular helped them to transform an uninspired branch of Pick Up Stix into an airy, sun-kissed café with a skylight, plenty of windows, red chairs and blackboard menus. Nathan’s mother contributed soft lighting and retro art.

The native Santa Monicans have embraced the city’s eco-conscious ethos. “We like to do things consciously,” says Loeb. “We like to focus on doing things with as much care as possible.” They light Huckleberry sparingly and participate in a Santa Monica program that diverts food waste to Bakersfield for composting. They even keep an herb and flower garden behind Huckleberry.

At Huckleberry, the couple emphasizes a community-oriented approach, featuring cheese from nearby Andrew’s Cheese Shop, coffee from Caffè Luxxe and handcrafted pottery from Venice beach resident Luna Garcia. Furthermore, Nathan and Loeb handpick produce at the Santa Monica Farmers’ Market.

At breakfast, Nathan bakes items like scones, crostatas, donuts and Niman Ranch maple-bacon biscuits. Later in the day, expect gingerbread cookies, banana caramel pie and carrot cake layered with mascarpone cream. Huckleberry’s “Daily Bread” includes rustic baguette, ciabatta and brioche.

At breakfast, Green Eggs & Ham showcases La Quercia prosciutto on a housemade English muffin, and fried egg sandwiches host Niman Ranch bacon, Gruyere, arugula and aioli on country bread. For lunch, there are turkey meatball sandwiches and flatbreads fired in a deck oven. On Thursdays, Nathan bastes rotisserie duck with maple syrup. No matter the dish, Loeb promises every ingredient is “the best of the best.”

Nathan has earned acclaim for her baking prowess, but she started by butchering animals for Mario Batali at Lupa in Manhattan. She cooked professionally for five years before landing at Tartine Bakery in San Francisco. Owners Elisabeth Prueitt and Chad Robertson taught Nathan how to bake. Nathan considers Sherry Yard, Wolfgang Puck’s decorated pastry chef, as another mentor. Yard fell for Nathan’s pastries at bld and recently baked the couple’s wedding cake. “She’s shown me that there’s a really sweet and supportive side to this industry,” says Nathan.

“I just want people to come in here and smile,” says Nathan. “That’s all I care about ... I want that kid in a candy store feeling.”

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