

The crowded pâtisserie, filled with decadent cakes, pastries, cookies and pies, bustles with customers eager to make their selections from the fully stocked display shelves. The choices are endless, and each heavenly dessert appears perfectly constructed. Carrot cakes, cheesecakes and lemon-lavender buttercream cakes tempt customers with their drizzled glazes and candy-coated flowers. Personal-sized citron-mousse cakes look tempting topped with tangy lemon curd and garnished with a sugared lemon slice. The vermilion and chartreuse colored walls of Sweet Life Pâtisserie on 755 Monroe Street in Eugene, Ore., display pictures and drawings of intricately ornamented cakes made in-house by talented cake decorators.

Sweet Life's extensive menu informs customers that they only use “organic flours, expeller pressed oils, natural essential oil flavorings, real vanilla, Guittard chocolate, whole fresh and frozen fruits and local honey.” It also offers vegan, wheat and gluten-free desserts.

Located in the West 7th Alley behind Laughing Planet Café, Sweet Life Pâtisserie devotes a separate location for baking and decorating. An “Employees Only” door seals off the windowless bakery from the outside world. The open floor plan allows bakers, dishwashers and decorators to communicate while still having distinctive spaces for completing their appointed duties. Ovens and thick wooden-slab tables surround the bakers’ area while carts-on-wheels and sinks distinguish decorators’ space.

Talented cake decorators work diligently each day to produce delicious treats for the loyal customers of Sweet Life. Specially ordered cakes take priority in creating, but otherwise these cake decorators produce cakes to fill the display shelves of the store two blocks away. Customers find endless choices at the Sweet Life Pâtisserie. From the award-winning Rhapsody—chocolate cake with chocolate-raspberry mousse, ganache, and raspberry puree on top—to custom-made cakes with dozens of choices of cake flavor, filling and/or topping and frosting, the shelves stay stocked from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Sixteen employees working in Sweet Life’s hidden bakery create around 125 cakes per day. The pâtisserie attempts to sell the cakes for about two to three days, but if unsuccessful, they donate them to local organizations within the community. This doesn’t happen often, as there are always hungry customers eager to devour whatever treats line the shelves.

At noon on Saturday, Sweet Life stirs with Eugene residents ready to get their sweet fix. Tempted patrons leisurely stroll by with their eyes fixed on the decadent confections that line the refrigerated shelves. With so many enticing choices, it is not uncommon for there to be customers lined up waiting for others to finally choose their sweet indulgence. After the light, airy buttercream frosting tickles the taste buds with delight, customers immediately know they will revisit the local pâtisserie for more.

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