Cajun Bakers Break Tradition

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For the French bakers, it was an impressive sight - rows of sumptuous cakes and pastries in brilliant colors.

There was a bright blue 'Jaws' cake, with the head of a killer shark bursting through a sheet of icing "water" the color of the Caribbean. A little pair of flesh-colored legs angled from the sharks' jagged-like teeth.

Miss Piggy was represented, with vibrant yellow curls accenting her pinkoker skin.

There was even a cake which looked like a giant hamburger, toasted brown on top with colorful condiments on the side - green pickles, yellow mustard, red catsup and orange cheese.

In France, the use of color in pastries is illegal.

**Ingredients Are Important**

"It is against the law because of what you put in the color," explained Ellyette Grunfeld, general manager of Codetem, a French travel agency based in New York.

She was in Lafayette yesterday at Poupart's Bakery giving a group of 45 traveling French bakers a look at the baked goodies which Americans enjoy. The trip was sponsored by a French margarine company that manufactures many products for bakeries.

"They (the French bakers) are amazed by the color," Grunfeld said. "It is not natural. We are not allowed to put something (in pastries) that is not natural. It's very strict."

Glancing at the colorful display, she added, "You will never see that. Never, never... The clients will never buy them."

**Fellow Frenchmen**

In addition to the sweets, Francois Poupart, owner of Poupart's, had also provided bread for his guests, but it was offered as it is in France - sans wrappers. Wrappers, such as cellophane, tend to make bread soft, an undesirable quality to most French palates.

There was also plenty of wine to help wash down the delectable treats.

The bakers had a chance to see American trends in baking and saw a demonstration of how some of the specialties of Poupart's are made.

**HOW IS IT DONE?**

About 50 bakers and pastry chefs gathered at Pouparts Bakery in Lafayette yesterday to learn the American way of producing sweets and breads.

They seemed impressed with the colors used in many American pastries, since it is illegal in France to use artificial color in baked goods. (Photo by Ann Wakefield)

"We exchange ideas," he said. "Bakers are very close together."

He has no explanation for the camaraderie between bakers. Perhaps, he said, it is the long hours or the special work they do.

"It has always been that way," he said, with a shrug. Poupart broke from family tradition when he became a baker. He comes from a family of carpenters. In fact, his twin brother is a builder in Lafayette.

Poupart was exposed as a child to the craft that would become his life. "Next to my house, they used to have a bakery. I used to hang around," he recalls.

One difference between French and American bakery customers, Poupart said, is Americans' willingness to try new pastries or breads.

In Acadiana, he said, "They eat anything." Customers are also willing to try new treats and if they like them, they will continue to buy them.

And, it seems the more colorful the pastries, the better.