



Joe Luna adds the finishing touches to his homemade fika buns.

OFF MENU

Culture twist

BY ASHLEY HAYES-STONE

In Sweden, “fika” is a relaxing coffee and pastry break, an essential part of daily life. Now, Sacramento has its own taste of Northern Europe with Swedish-inspired fika buns and sweets from Boy’s Bakery.

Inspired by his time in Sweden with his wife and two kids, founder Joe Luna, who’s originally from Sacramento, decided to start his own pop-up bakery in 2017 that combines his Filipino roots with his passion for baking and love for Scandinavian sweets.

“I want people to feel connected to Sacramento when they have a fika bun,” Luna says. “I want them to say ‘Oh, that’s very Sacramento’ and I want them to be a part of that community.”

The 30-year-old baker’s pop-up features an array of Swedish treats with his creative twist. Fika buns are the small Scandinavian version of an American cinnamon roll with a soft gooey center minus the excessive frosting. Luna’s take is lightly sweetened with cinnamon and filled

with Filipino flavors such as sweet purple yam.

Luna’s bakery also includes crisp and buttery Filipino shortbread cookies that incorporate common Swedish ingredients including cardamom and pistachios.

During his Sacramento childhood, Luna says that his whole family on his Filipino side would spend countless hours in the kitchen. But his interest in Swedish pastries began with his high school sweetheart, Johanna. Originally from Sweden, she missed her home country so much that Luna made her “mazariner,” a traditional almond tart, to cure her homesickness.

Luna didn’t attempt to make his first batch of “bulle,” (Swedish cardamom buns) until he attended the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone in St. Helena in 2008 after Johanna expressed a craving for some. Although he didn’t finish the institute’s program, Luna graduated from American River College and UC Berkeley, where he studied anthropology.

In 2013, Johanna and Luna attended graduate school in Sweden where he worked in the restaurant industry, immersing himself in the Swedish language, culture and cuisine by learning to perfect his baking skills. The couple split last year, but the two remain close friends and co-parent their two children.

With Boy’s Bakery, he continues to add his own culture into the Swedish-style pastries.

“This journey started off as a story between me and Johanna, but since we separated, I’m adding flavors I grew up with to show a little bit of me,” Luna says. “That’s why there’s been a focus more on some of the Filipino sweets so I can share those with other people too.” □

Taste Joe Luna’s Filipino and Swedish treats at Milka Coffee Roasters, 1501 G St. Also follow Boy’s Bakery on Instagram @joeboybakes to catch upcoming holiday baking classes at Barrio Bakery, details at facebook.com/boysfika.

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