

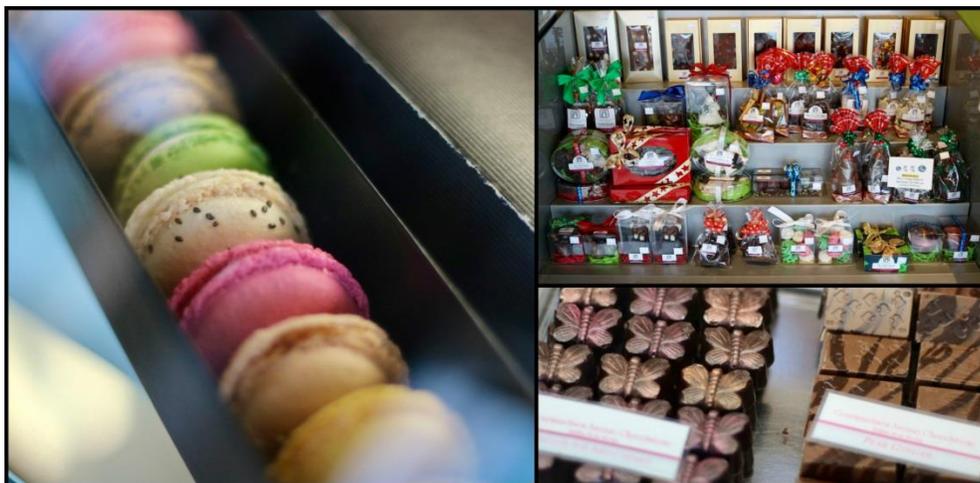
Vendor Spotlight: Gourmandises Avenue Chocolaterie

By Laura Kirkpatrick & Sarah Rector



Growing up in France, Jean-Pierre Gallois was always surrounded by delicious pastries. His mother sparked his passion for baking through her own creation of desserts for their family. At just seven years old, Jean-Pierre was creating his first pastries. His sisters and parents would serve as his taste testers and would try everything he created in the kitchen.

When he was 12 years old on holiday break, he worked with a local pastry chef in his village and learned the art of creating French pastries. “I was working the same hours as the chef and it became something I really wanted to do,” Jean-Pierre said. “I wanted to do it for a living.”



At the age of 15, Jean-Pierre decided to leave school and complete a two-year apprenticeship with the same pastry chef he had been learning from. Although his teachers told him it was better to stay in school, he knew what he wanted. “I wanted to have my head in the chocolate,” he said. “I didn’t want to go to university.”

In France, when completing a two-year baking apprenticeship, one has to sign a contract with a Master Pastry Chef. For three weeks out of each month, Jean-Pierre would work in the shop. For the fourth week, he would attend a school where he’d learn the basics of baking. At the end of the two-year apprenticeship, he took an exam on four topics: pastries, chocolate, candy and ice cream. Upon completion of the exam, Jean-Pierre received a certificate allowing him to live out his dream as a pastry chef.

Fast forward to 2003 when Jean-Pierre and his wife Yseult opened Gourmandises Avenue in Eastern Passage, Nova Scotia. Their local dessert shop sold everything from cake, macarons, chocolates and of course, French pastries. Although they were a small scale business, their shop was booming. By 2009, they decided to apply to be a storefront vendor at the Halifax Seaport Farmers’ Market and they’ve been here for the past seven years.



At first, Jean-Pierre said they were a little shy when it came to talking to customers because of the language barrier. In the past, him and his wife had always worked in restaurants and hotels so they hardly ever interacted with their customers. Now, Jean-Pierre and Yseult enjoy talking to customers and learning where they’re from and what they like about their products. They love telling people about their baking process and hearing feedback from them. They can’t imagine running their business any other way.

Right now, Jean-Pierre is happy where the business is. They want to stay where they are and continue to create good quality products. “My idea is not to have a large team working in a lab and shipping all across Canada,” Jean-Pierre said. “We want to focus on local and stay local.”