

Pastry chef brings tastes of Europe to Stouffville

BRUCE STAPLEY
Correspondent

Mohamed Elsayed is looking to bring a little bit of Europe to Stouffville.

The Egyptian-born pastry chef is the creative force behind Mr. Zee's Sinful Sweets, the French-style cafe which recently opened up in the Success Square Plaza. With Elsayed personally presiding over the baking of the French pastries, muffins, and cookies, the business also offers specialty coffees, capucino, sandwiches and other goodies.

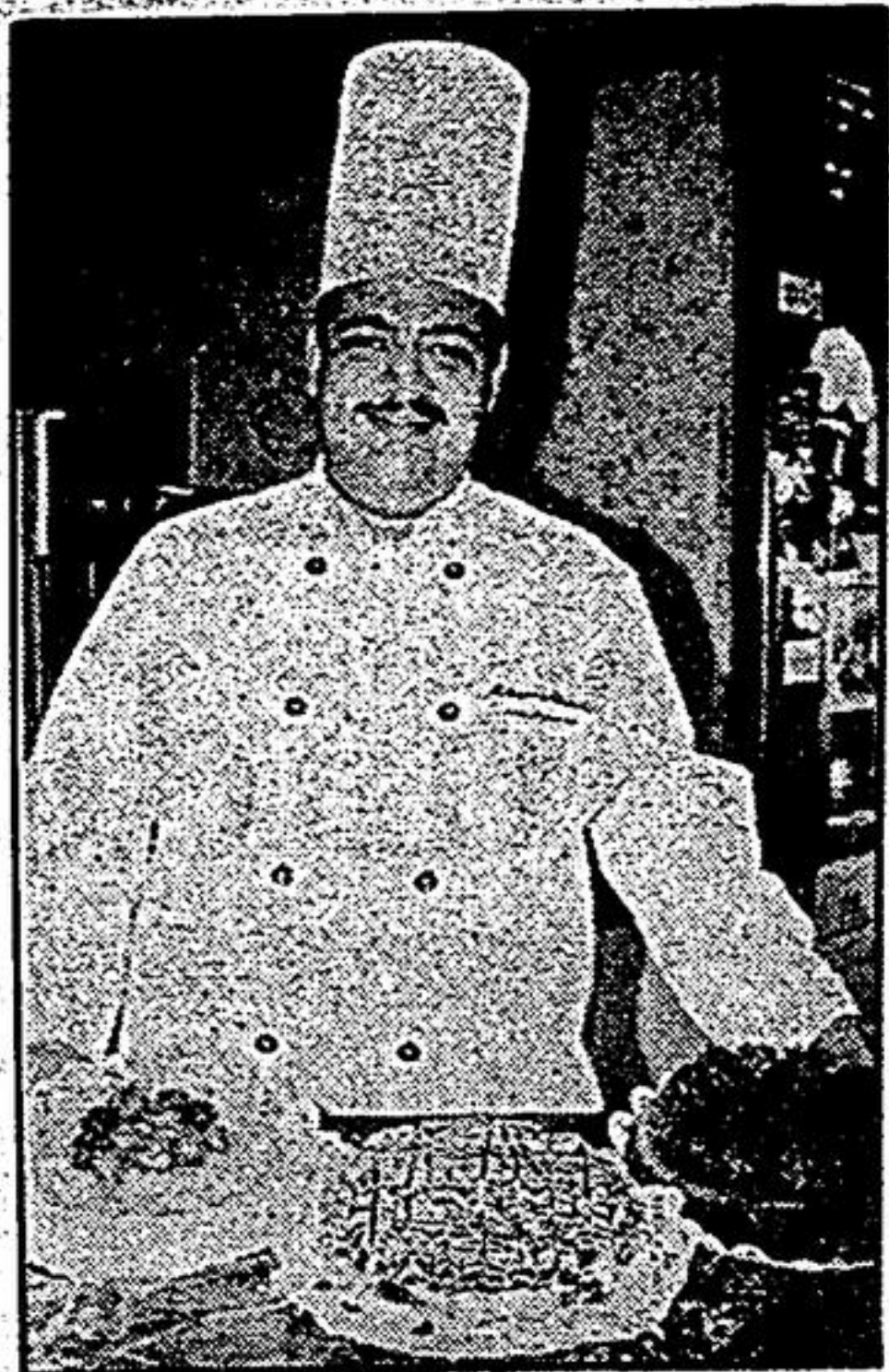
Stouffville is the latest stop on a career road which has seen Elsayed work as a pastry chef for a cruise ship on the Nile River, as a sous chef at a French restaurant in Toronto and a large Markham hotel.

A Scarborough resident and the father of a three year old son, Elsayed is out to change the eating habits of people in Stouffville and the surrounding area.

"I don't like popular North American food - hamburgs, hot dogs, and apple pie," Elsayed said. "I don't make apple pie. We're trying to provide European pastries made from fresh cream, Belgian chocolate, and fresh fruits. This kind of pastry is very new for North America. If people don't have the chance to go to Europe, we'll bring Europe to them."

Elsayed isn't planning to restrict his creations to Stouffville alone. He is in the process of setting up arrangements which will make his pastries available in some of the bigger hotel restaurants in the Toronto area. He has already hired an assistant to help him out, and with over \$30,000 worth of baking equipment in place and more on the way, he is ready to handle the volume.

For Elsayed, the new business means a return to the early wake ups and long hours he has had to adapt to in so many of his previous jobs. "My last job was from 9-5, five days a week, at Toronto Catering. It gave me time to spend with my family. But now I'm right back into it. I come in here at 4 a.m. three times a week."



Chef Mohamed Elsayed runs Mr. Zee's Sinful Sweets at Success Square Plaza.

Elsayed studied hotel and food management under French instruction for four years at a private university in Alexandria, Egypt. He went to France to finish his training, then spent two years as a pastry chef on a Hilton cruise ship offering Nile voyages. He came to Canada in 1986, taking a job with an uncle who owns Encore SVP, a French restaurant in Toronto. Since then, he has also worked as a sous chef at hotels in Markham and North York.

The Success Square opportunity represented a new challenge for him, and he is taking to it with enthusiasm. Despite the questionable economy, he thinks he can make a go of the business.

"I love it here. It's always risky opening a business, but sometimes you have to take a chance. This town had nowhere to go for French pastries and the type of thing we're offering here. Recession or no, peo-

ple will always eat."

Asked if he'd set aside his disapproval of pies and offer pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving, Elsayed compro-

mised. "We'll make pumpkin pie, but it will be different, like a pumpkin cheesecake or something like that."

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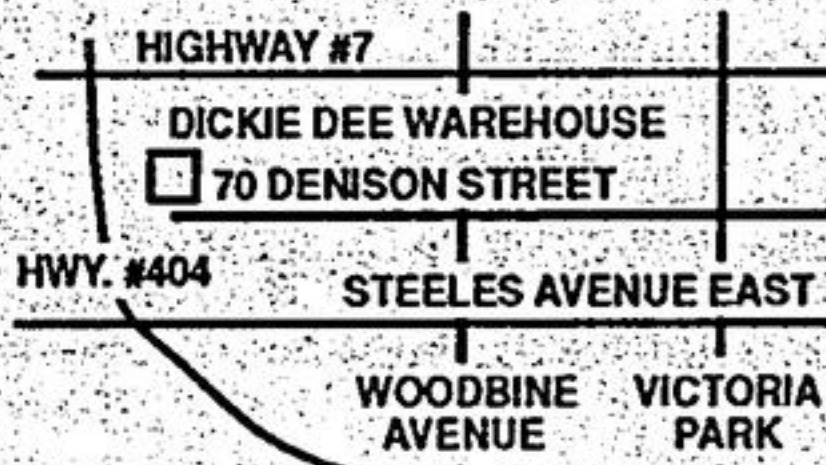


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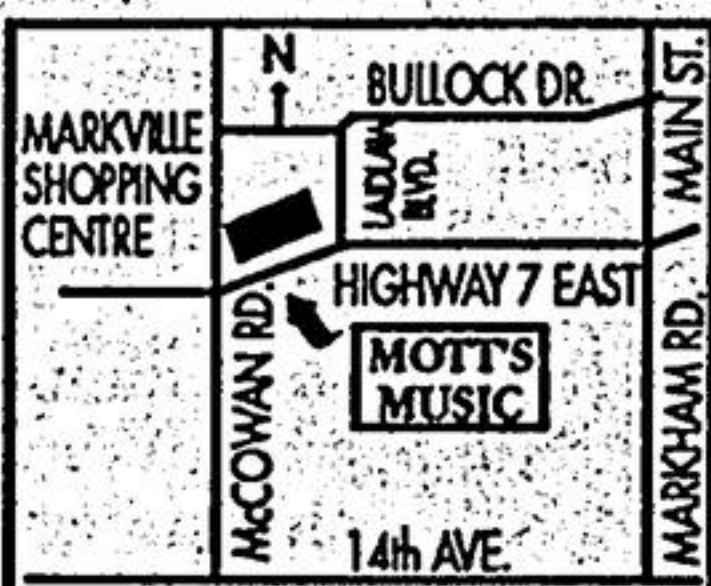
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