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JOE MANGIO/THE EXAMINER

Workers at Boudin Bakery take inventory and conduct training in preparation for its grand opening today.

Boudin Bakery: Going for 'authentic' feel at the Wharf

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With today's opening of a new demonstration bakery, historical museum, café and restaurant, Boudin Bakery is offering its own unique flavor to the visitors flocking to Fisherman's Wharf.

"We think people will find this authentic and refreshing," said Lou Giraudo, co-chairman of the San Francisco company that dates back to 1849.

Located at Pier 43½, the new 26,000-square-foot Boudin at the Wharf, features a 5,000-square-foot demonstration bakery surrounded largely by glass and affords up-close and birds-eye views of the baking of Boudin's hallmark sourdough French bread.

Some of the bakers will even be wired with a microphone, so they can talk to the visitors stopping by the front window.

The facility will also include Baker's Hall, featuring a coffee bar, bakeshop, heated patio, and market stocked with specialty foods from Northern California. Upstairs, is the museum, which offers a historical view of San Francisco through the eyes of a gold-miner and baker, Giraudo explained. Also upstairs is the restaurant, Bistro Boudin, offering local foods, such as steak, seafood, pasta and pizza — including a sourdough pizza — and views of the Bay.

Boudin's new venture is a perfect fit with the Port of San Francisco's vision for the wharf, said Kirk Bennett, manager of waterfront development

Opening today

Boudin Bakery will officially open Boudin at the Wharf with a ribbon cutting ceremony at 10 a.m. today at 160 Jefferson St., near Pier 43½, San Francisco.

Tours of the new facility will begin after the ceremony. Boudin's new restaurant at the wharf, Bistro Boudin, will open Thursday.

projects with that agency.

"The port's waterfront plan and many advisory groups over the years have always had a vision of some kind of authentic marketplace at that particular location," Bennett said.

More than 2½ years in the making, Boudin at the Wharf, is the company's new flagship. Giraudo declined to reveal the cost of the project.

"It was expensive," he said, laughing.

Giraudo and his business partner, Sharon Duvall, were able to acquire the Alioto family's lease with the Port of San Francisco for the wharf property. That 42-year agreement calls for a minimum rent of \$500,000 annually plus a percentage rent of the food, beverage and retail sales, according to Bennett. Minimum rent is adjusted every five years.

The San Francisco company operates approximately 30 bakery-cafes in California and plans to open another three cafes in the fall. Giraudo said he anticipates Boudin's 2005 sales will reach \$50 million.

About 20,000 loaves of bread are made each day at Boudin's main bakery on 10th Avenue at Geary Boulevard. The bakery at the wharf is expected to produce about 4,000 loaves each day.

The business was founded in San Francisco 1849 by French baker Isidore Boudin, who was given sourdough starter by a gold miner. Since then, the bread has been baked with a portion of the same "mother dough" that is refreshed on a daily basis.

Giraudo's father Steve Giraudo Sr., a master baker at Boudin, bought the business in 1941. It was the senior Giraudo's idea to open the first retail demonstration bakery at the wharf nearly 30 years ago. The new 26,000-square-foot facility greatly enlarges upon Giraudo's original concept.

By 1993, Boudin's had become part of a much larger company built by Lou Giraudo and Duvall. That year, they sold the entire company to Specialty Foods of Illinois.

Afterward, Steve Giraudo Sr., who remained on board as chairman emeritus, personally visited the bakeries at 10th Avenue and the wharf every day to oversee the baking.

"He worked there every day until the day he died in 1997," Lou Giraudo said.

In 2002, Lou Giraudo and Duvall had the opportunity to purchase Boudin Bakery once again.

"Of all the companies we owned and operated, this was the one that had the familial tie and the emotional tie," he said.