

ENTERTAINMENT

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# West Virginia bakers are hotdogging

## But some regional delicacy stunts fall flat

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Classic hot dogs at Spring Hill Pastry Shop/ Provided by Charleston Visitor Information Station



BY DAVINA VAN BUREN

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. But when it comes to a beloved regional foodstuff, you’ve gotta put some respect on it—and, in the case of hot dog donuts, pillowy, house-made pastry around it.

Drive by Spring Hill Pastry Shop in South Charleston any Saturday morning, and you’re guaranteed to see a line out the door and down the sidewalk. Many of the people in line will be waiting for the bakery’s signature item, their legendary creme-filled “hot dogs.”

Hot dogs—a split, eclair-like confection dusted with powdered sugar (and, if you prefer, drizzled with dark chocolate)—have been on the Spring Hill menu since the bakery’s opening in September 1948. To this day, they remain its best-selling item.

Owner Robin Williams has said that his grandfather and the bakery’s founder, James Williams, came up with the recipe following his stint as a baker in the United States Navy:

“The icing that goes in those is a recipe that he made back then,” he told [an online news outlet](#). “He was just looking for something to put it in. We have regular donuts like everyone else, but he decided to roll these pieces of dough up to where they come out shaped like a hot dog bun, and he could slice it and fill it with that icing. He really liked that icing.”

Even better for the Williamses, “Other people really liked it too. We sell a bazillion of them.”

Lately the treat has inspired several local bakers to attempt their own versions of this beloved regional foodstuff. There’s [Rock City Cake Company’s “Long John,”](#) a misnomer since it is served open-faced, not filled. Then there’s the [“Wimpy John” at Valley Cakes & Cafe](#), a slightly fancier-looking version with delicate decorative piping atop the buttercream and heavily dusted with powdered sugar.



Provided by Rylee Vealey of Batter Bliss

But what happens when hot dogs go wrong? A few weeks ago, one local baker’s take on the trend didn’t sit right with the community. West Virginians aren’t exactly known for wearing kid gloves, and some were less than tactful in their reviews of Sarah’s Bakery’s “butter buns,” which some patrons suspected were based on a recipe for New Zealand cream buns.

In a local restaurant review Facebook group, people voiced [strong opinions](#) about this particular twist on the classic, which several people insinuated was composed of a lesser bread product.

“That’s literally a hot dog bun,” said Kenneth Jones.

“If people want to eat a storebought hot dog bun covered in Betty Crocker frosting so be it lol,” added Johnny Cage.

What appeared to add fuel to the posters’ fire is the fact that Sarah’s is a beloved local institution where the pastries are typically on point. The controversy finally died down when Sarah Plumley herself canceled the buns in response to negative feedback. When approached by *The Food Section*, Plumley declined to comment on the episode.

I used to think nothing could be better than a Spring Hill Pastry Shop hot dog. And no doubt, visiting the iconic bakery is an entire vibe that cannot be replicated. But that was before I experienced a Molly dog at Batter & Bliss. There are not many things that will get me out of bed at 6:30 a.m., but its “Elvis” dog—a playful twist on The King’s favorite meal with banana cream filling, peanut butter drizzle, and candied bacon—is one of them. Batter & Bliss often sells out of Molly dogs within a couple of hours of opening, even though the bakery is in a holler far from the center of town.

“We knew that being the first bakery to do flavors with their hot dog pastries would attract new people out of curiosity,” said Rylee Vealey, 19, who opened the bakery in April.

Molly dogs, named for Vealey’s 14-year-old Shih Tzu/terrier mix, are her most popular item. She started the new flavored hot dog trend with varieties like banana pudding, strawberry crunch, and Reese’s, in addition to the classic cream filling.

“Our buttercream is very simple but very popular,” she says. “It’s nothing like a whipped icing or buttercream at the supermarket.”

Vealey’s creations have sparked an outbreak of hot dog creativity, with other bakers rushing to flavor their fillings. Even Plumley’s getting in on the act, [announcing](#) the addition of “Chubby Buns” to her menu.

Not every culinary experiment hits the mark. But West Virginians’ enduring fondness for hot dog pastries proves that when it comes to sweet treats, there’s always room for another twist—so long as it’s delicious.

### COMMENTS

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*Jim Workman*

Enjoyed the article! West Virginians are definitely passionate about hot dogs, whether they are pastries or the iconic chili – slaw – onion – mustard version!

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*Davina van Buren*

Thanks for reading, Jim!

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