

Dish Omaha – July 9th, 2025

Jeff: Well, here she is, KVNO's resident foodie for Dish Omaha. Good morning, Diane.

Diane: Good morning, Jeff. You know, mornings say to me, doughnuts. No, I didn't bring you one, I'm sorry. Because I don't know, are you a cake doughnut or a raised doughnut kind of guy?

Jeff: Well, there's no wrong answer if you're bringing me a doughnut.

Diane: Correct. Correct.

Jeff: However, if I had to choose, raised.

Diane: I'm the same. I'm the same. You know, doughnuts date back thousands of years. The Greeks and Romans fried pastries in oil with honey before they were doughnuts. Then there were Middle Eastern civilizations, Dutch civilizations doing the same thing. And the hole for the doughnut, the legend has it, it was invented by a ship captain named Hanson Gregory in 1847 for more frying room on the dough to make it more consistent. Otherwise, it was just a little too soggy in the middle.

Jeff: Oh, I see. Huh,

Diane: Yeah. And so, remember, it used to be called Doughnut D-O-U-G-H-N-U-T, and then suddenly it became Donut D-O-N-U-T.

Jeff: Yeah. Every once in a while, I still spell it the old way, and I feel old fashioned.

Diane: Same! Well, Dunkin' Donuts was the organization that shortened that. And everything changed in the 1920s when in the United States, the automated doughnut machine was invented.

Jeff: I'm not complaining.

Diane: Me neither. So, like anything else in Omaha, the European immigrants, the folks who made Omaha what it is, brought this pastry to our city, Germans, Czechs, Scandinavians. And back when they would do them at church events, they were called crullers. I've heard that before.

Jeff: You've see them once in a while.

Diane: Or fried cakes. So, Merritt's Bakery was one of the first in Omaha in the 60s and 70s to popularize the doughnut. And then, I didn't know this, but Winchell's came here in the 60s. And they're still here. They have over 100 varieties of doughnuts. Krispy Kreme and Dunkin' came here in the early 2000s.

Jeff: And just speaking of Czech culture, growing up in South Omaha, I'll recall a place called Neneman's Bakery. And it was lovely. And the cool thing about it, it wasn't a doughnut, but if you were a kid, just being a kid, you walk in, automatically you got a free sugar cookie.

Diane: Well, that's pretty great. I would like a sugar cookie right now. Doughnuts kind of had a resurgence when people started making gourmet, artisan doughnuts. You can get them at farmer's markets now. There are doughnut food trucks. And they're even on restaurants' high-end dessert menus. I can think of one in the old market that's got doughnuts on the dessert menu at Gather.

Jeff: Oh, really? Oh, I did not know that. Okay.

Diane: So, there's so many stalwarts that have been here for a long time. Pettit's has been here since 1954. LaMars, I didn't realize, has been here since 1933. And Olsen's Bake Shop, which is still around, has been here 100 years.

Jeff: Wow. And Olsen's is great, too. Again, not doughnut, but they're kolache. Pretty great. You got to get there early in the morning because people drive for hours and they'll sell out of the poppy seed.

Diane: They do. And they're not open that long. They know their game.

Jeff: That's right.

Diane: But some of the interesting, crazy, kooky ones you can get, Mochi Nut is a mochi doughnut that's from Hawaii. And it's a combo of an American doughnut and a Japanese mochi, which is a rice cake. And when you look at it, it's like more of a ring. It's more of like a very specific ring. Some of the crazy flavors, taro, yuzu, but also cookies and cream. Very delicious.

Jeff: You know, what we don't have, I don't think, cronuts. It's the mashup of a croissant and a doughnut. They're really famous in New York. And then Nashville has Five Daughters Bakery. They can't legally call it a cronut. They call it the 100-layer doughnut.

Diane: Why can't they call it a cronut?

Jeff: It's trademarked, I think.

Diane: Oh, okay.

Jeff: Yeah, I think that's the case.

Diane: I think you should make one for me.

Jeff: I think someone should take that up, and maybe we'll get a Five Daughters here at some point.

Diane: Hertz Doughnut came here a couple of years ago from Lincoln. I used to have them when I worked for a place in Lincoln, and they'd bring them in. They're enormous. Their frosting and toppings are enormous. The favorite one I had was the Cookie Monster. It has blue vanilla frosting with Oreos. That place is open 24 hours, just in case you're up really early.

Jeff: Yes.

Diane: And then Square Doughnut is a square doughnut. They make them in the shape of a square with a hole. And they've got a bubblegum flavor, a PB&J, and last year's Doughnut of the Month was a Neapolitan.

Jeff: A PB&J doughnut.

Diane: Yeah.

Jeff: Wow. It's two in one.

Diane: It's a sandwich and a dessert. There are 10 billion doughnuts consumed in this country every year, which means 30 per person.

Jeff: 30 per person. Let me think. Am I good for 30 per person?

Diane: Did you get there?

Jeff: I'm going to work on it.

Diane: OK.

Jeff: I don't think I'm there yet, but I will work on it.

Diane: Let's go.

Jeff: All right, Diane. Thanks so much.

Diane: See you.

Jeff: Diane Watson, KVNO's resident foodie for Dish Omaha.