

# A History of Kringle with O&H Danish Bakery

The WisconsinMade Blog

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<http://wisconsinmade.blog/artisan-profile/oh-danish-bakery/>

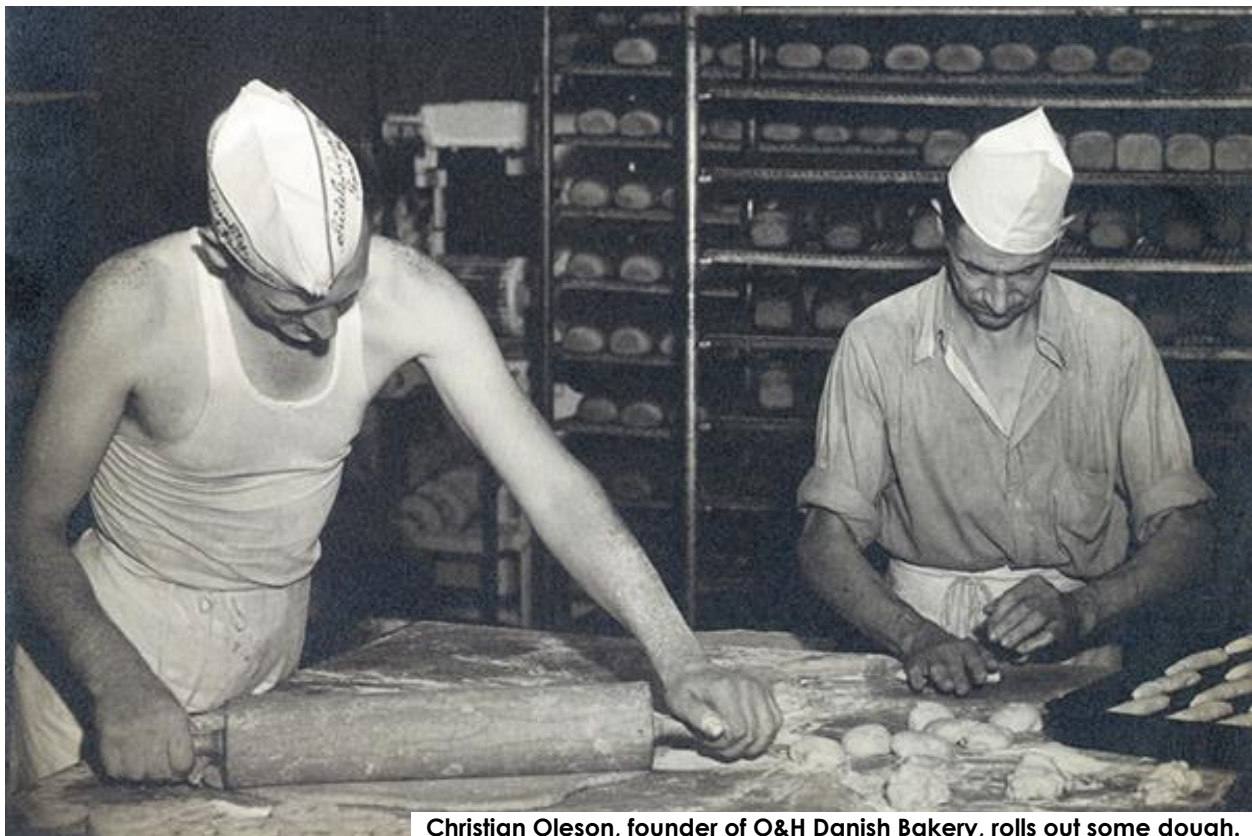
ARTISAN COLLECTIVE

Several weeks ago, a woman walked into O&H Danish Bakery in Racine, Wisconsin. Behind the counter, the clerk said, "Oh, you're going to have this donut." The customer didn't question what the donut was. She purchased it, ate it, and loved it.

That's the rapport O&H Bakery built with its community since its founding by Christian Oleson. Christian immigrated from Denmark to Racine with his father in the early 1920s. For two decades, he worked as a baker.

"He learned the trade in a variety of Danish bakeries," says Matt Horton, vice president of marketing for O&H Bakery. "He took that training and decided to open his own with his perspective of what Danish baking should be."

When O&H Bakery first opened in 1949, the majority of its products were bread and other bread-based products. This is because Racine was still recovering from the Great Depression and World War II, where people's values were focused on practicality. If



Christian Oleson, founder of O&H Danish Bakery, rolls out some dough.

O&H Bakery sold sweet pastries, they were in traditional Danish flavors such as almond and marzipan.

“That’s one of the biggest differences is the evolution of American consumers,” Matt says. “The variety and inspiration from a lot of different cultures, a lot of different requests from customers over the years to add blueberry or cherry.”

As for when O&H started specializing in Kringle, you have president Dwight Eisenhower to thank for that. He received a sample of it from a bakery in Racine (though it was not O&H Bakery).

“His wife Mamie Eisenhower happened to be a pretty big foodie,” Matt says. “I remember pictures of both of them eating food. She loved her desserts and vacations. She proclaimed Kringle as being one of her favorite desserts.”

That kind of media is hard to come by, and it also solidified Kringle as a mainstay in Racine. Even today, people bring it to family gatherings and parties, eat it at holidays (especially Christmastime).

“That sharing has created this network of people who have tried it, experienced it, loved it and then continued to buy it for themselves.”

Today, O&H Bakery deals mainly in Kringle, though they also sell cakes and coffee cakes. Just like when they first opened in the 1940s, all their products are made from scratch by hand and use locally-sourced ingredients.

“It’s a beloved pastry,” Matt says about Kringle. “Everyone has their favorites. Kind of like, no matter where you go with food, people have a perspective. Racinians know what good bakery is, they know what good Kringle is, and they’re not afraid to tell you. We’re fortunate that we have a number of great bakeries in different flavors and different people and customers who push us to get better.”



**Today, raspberry Kringle is the most popular flavor of Kringle for O&H Danish Bakery.**

That’s the philosophy that drives the current generation of Olesons who own and operate O&H Bakery today.

Matt, a big baseball fan, mentions a quote from Willie Mays: “*It’s not hard being good once in a while. It’s hard being good every single day.*”

“There’s always something here to learn and always something you can get better at,” Matt says. “That’s the way you improve your bakery, whether it’s new flavors, whether it’s marketing, whether it’s new ways to having the right conversation with customers. That’s what motivates me and a number of other people here. Hopefully that’ll continue to be the case and we continue to get better and improve.”