



GOING, GOING, GONE
Ansel holds up a tray of yellow peach and black tea Cronuts.

TRACKED

DOMINIQUE ANSEL

The chef who turned the Cronut into a fetish object refuses to rest on his laurels.

BY CHRISTOPHER ROSS PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARTINE FOUGERON

SHORTLY BEFORE OPENING at 8 a.m., Dominique Ansel Bakery in SoHo has the charged mood of a TV show that's about to go live. "Nine minutes!" chef Ansel shouts as he stalks across the floor, head swiveling. Brisk, white-aproned employees move even more briskly. When a security guard entrusted with keeping order among the customers waiting outside pops in, Ansel asks how many people are in line; "103," he answers before hurrying on his way. At 7:58 a.m. Ansel calls out, "Two minutes!" And then, moments before the crowd descends: "You guys ready?" "Ready, chef!" the staff replies in unison. At eight on the dot, Ansel opens the doors. The customers, some of whom have been waiting nearly two hours, file inside, wide-eyed, chatty and sniffing the air, which is fragrant with butter and caramel.

With his invention last year of the Cronut—a

croissant-doughnut hybrid that has acquired a rabid global cult following—the James Beard Award-winning Ansel, 36, quickly found his place in New York City's gastronomic firmament. Like a pastrami sandwich from Katz's or the oyster pan roast at the Grand Central Oyster Bar, his pastries have joined the foodie tourist's bucket list as customers from as far afield as Zimbabwe and the Philippines come to sample and Instagram them. With the highly anticipated release of his debut cookbook, *Dominique Ansel: The Secret Recipes*, and a second location planned for Tokyo, his reach is set to extend even further.

For a man who makes his living filling bellies, as a child his own was sometimes empty. He grew up north of Paris in a poor neighborhood of Beauvais and dropped out of school at 16 to help support his family by working in kitchens. After traveling the world

opening locations for the legendary French patisserie Fauchon, he came to New York to spend six years as the pastry chef at Daniel. In 2011 he opened his own store and within months was being hailed by critics as the best pastry chef in the city.

The popularity of the Cronut sometimes overshadows his other, equally innovative creations, such as the DKA, a crispy, caramelized variation on a kouign-amann; a chewy "frozen s'more" inspired by Turkish ice cream; or his chocolate chip cookies shaped like shot glasses and filled with milk. Even in a business of workaholics, his drive to innovate stands out: On his feet 17 hours a day, seven days a week, Ansel keeps a pace that assistants, staff and the occasional journalist struggle to match. His dreamy-eyed expression may suggest a boyish wonder, but his stiff posture reflects the intensity of a strict disciplinarian. >



6:18 a.m.
Makes espresso, his second caffeinated beverage of the day. Ansel typically awakens between three and four in the morning.



6:52 a.m.
Live on WPIX
Ansel shows off heart-shaped pretzels paired with raspberry butter, debuting at an event later that day.



8:00 a.m.
Open for business
Weekday-morning lines are reliably more than a hundred people long. Weekend lines are even longer.



3:36 p.m.
Back at the shop,
Ansel samples flavors for next month's Cronut, tidies up the store and holds a staff meeting.



12:40 p.m.
Poses for pictures
with model Chrissy Teigen and his pretzels at a DKNY event in Madison Square Park.



5:11 p.m.
En route
to London with Cronut dough for a few lucky overseas fans.

24
hours

a day that the bakery is in operation. The ovens never shut off.

4
pairs

of Birkenstock clogs that Ansel typically burns through in a year.

2

Cronuts

per walk-in customer. Apart from preorders made weeks in advance, everyone must wait in line. No exceptions.

600
percent

Markup of Cronut prices on the black market at the height of the pastry's popularity—\$35 apiece as opposed to the retail price, \$5.

8

weddings

Ansel catered last year. He agrees to work with a couple only if he believes the marriage will last.

5

apples

go into his homemade blended morning juice, along with pineapple and a bunch of grapes.

3:58:15

Ansel's marathon time. He trained for it while working at Daniel and got three hours of sleep the night before the race.

30

employees

at the bakery. The kitchen, at 10 by 12 feet, is the smallest he's worked in.

28,000
meals

bought with funds raised by the Cronut Project for the Food Bank for New York City, by auctioning 12 Cronuts over the course of six days. ●