

## The sustainable bakery

Sustainability has great meaning to the artisan bread baking community.

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by John Unrein



Tartine Bakery seeks to bring craft bread to every daypart.

KANSAS CITY — Beyond ingredient transparency, the sustainable bakery means many things to the modern artisan bread baker: commitment to the environment, reduction of food waste, dedication to employees, and genuine care for the customer.

Rising star and head baker/partner Avery Ruzicka of Manresa Bread in Los Gatos, Calif., perhaps says it best: “This process that I love sustains people financially through employment, creatively through the production process and adds sustenance to our customers’ lives. It is pretty amazing.”

Chad Robertson of Tartine Bakery is on a mission to bring craft bread to every daypart (think breakfast sandwiches, buns, pizza and pasta), and sustainability is at the core of every step they take. The second Tartine Manufactory opens in 2018 in Los Angeles, promising to serve the best bread and pizza imaginable. At the original Tartine Manufactory (opened in San Francisco in 2016), one can order an egg sandwich on soft bun for breakfast, albacore flatbread for lunch, or steak tartare on Tartine’s country bread for dinner.

“The Tartine Manufactory is a forum to present bread in every possible way to the public,” he said. “We want to explore and bring back more grains. It’s happened with produce, meat. When I started baking, it was white flour and wheat flour. As a society today, people are making different choices. We want to try to push everything forward.”

Mr. Robertson wants to open doors for bakers to use more ancient grains like einkorn wheat and heritage grains raised by local farms, and others are doing likewise. Chicago’s Publican Quality Bread works directly with Spence Farm in Fairbury, Ill., on three heritage wheat varieties: Warthog for flavor, Red Fife for baking quality and Turkey Red for rising qualities.



Bakeries like Chicago's Publican Quality Bread want connections with local farms.



"We want a connection and relationship with the local farm," said Greg Wade, head baker at Publican.

All these efforts appear to connect to what today's consumers are seeking out. A new report by The Hartman Group reveals consumers want more information about a company's economic, social and environmental practices — and the more the better. According to the report, "Sustainability 2017: Connecting Benefits With Values Through Purposeful Consumption," nearly 70% of the 1,500 U.S. adult consumers surveyed expressed a desire for more transparency from companies about their sustainability practices.

When it comes to communicating transparency, it is not about the quantity of the information, according to the report. It's about the quality of the information. It is also the content of the information and the manner in which it is given. Consumers evaluate a company's transparency in terms of access to its values, policies and practices, and the openness of communication between a company and its customers.

"Consumers associate transparency with how authentically committed a company is to ethical action," said Laurie Demeritt, chief executive officer of The Hartman Group.



Roger Gural of Arcade Bakery pushes the limits of innovation with products like the laminated baguette.

### The sustainable bakery

Bakers across the nation are stepping up their efforts to embrace sustainability. Artisan bread baker Roger Gural opened Arcade Bakery in 2014 in New York City. As the owner and baker, he bakes in the morning shift, does some work at the oven and more time shaping and dividing. After a few hours, he prepares the retail area and then works up front for the rest of the day. In particular, he enjoys working with wheat flour and sets a goal to make his bakery more sustainable.

"I try not to respond too much to trends," Mr. Gural said. "For a while, the biggest impact was coming from anti-carb, anti-gluten dietary fads but that has settled down some. For the most part we focus on the European bakery staples with occasional twists."

He draws inspirations routinely from dining at restaurants and studying baking books, and is driven to succeed by his strict attention to detail.

"I suppose I am not easily satisfied, but I am not sure why I am like that," he said. "I enjoy repetition and paying attention to details."

Chefs have similar passions. At Manresa Bread, Ms. Ruzicka started out making 500-plus loaves out of Manresa's two small combi ovens. One year later, Manresa Bread was founded as its own brick and mortar bakery, and Ms. Ruzicka became partner and head baker. Manresa Bread was born out of the kitchen of chef David Kinch's Michelin 3-star Manresa restaurant in Las Gatos, California.

"The customer's increased curiosity and knowledge about where ingredients come from is one of the biggest trends I've seen recently," she said. "We use fresh-milled organic flour grown primarily in California and the Pacific Northwest. Our milk, cream, butter and sugar are organic. Our produce is all local and organic. We are very proud and fortunate to use some beautiful ingredients, so a more informed public is just a wonderful opportunity for us to share the ingredients we have been and will continue to use."

As a near-term goal, Ms. Ruzicka said she would love to create a panettone that incorporates fresh milled flour and is filled with candied citrus from local citrus trees.

"The two major ingredients in either my bread or my pastries are flour and butter," she said. "Listed on the back of an ingredient list, those two little simple words seem somewhat plain or pedestrian, but fresh-milled Yecora Rojo red wheat grown organically in California differs immensely from Italian flour used in panettone."

Lisa Ludwinski, head baker and owner of Sister Pie in Detroit, is equally inspired by the growing seasons in Michigan.

"What our farmers are growing is what we are using," she said. "Beyond that, my inspirations are all over the place — food shows I've watched, magazines I've read, places I've worked, etc."

Her favorite ingredients to work with include buckwheat flour and groats, tahini, rye flour, pistachios, cardamom, rhubarb and coconut.

In Seattle, Columbia City Bakery owner Evan Andres is excited about the attention the artisan bread community is receiving from what appears to be a growing number of food lovers in America who appreciate local bakers who produce great bread. He's a big fan of breads of the world (his shop sells Volkornbrot, a German rye), and he is impressed by the work of Washington State University's Bread Lab led by wheat breeder Stephen Jones.

"What they are doing is super amazing," Mr. Andres said of the work by The Bread Lab to bring more value to local wheat and grain farms in the state. "All of this flour was being shipped out of the country, and now we are enjoying many more sources of local grain."



Artisan breads with long fermentation and organic flours are the focus at places like Columbia City Bakery.

### What consumers are saying

Kerry, the taste and nutrition company, has published a report based on a massive consumer research study focusing on clean label. Kerry measured consumer perceptions about 54 specific ingredients to understand how "no-no" lists and nutritional standards are changing across generations. Findings available in the white paper are specific to American consumers and include an actionable definition of clean label and an understanding of what consumers want and don't want in their food.



Kerry's consumer survey reveals that over 80% of ingredient-conscious consumers believe clean labels are important, and almost as many are willing to pay more for healthier, cleaner products. Additionally, 75% of these consumers indicate they evaluate ingredients on a package, while 66% look at the nutritional panel. The study exposes that clean label is multi-dimensional for consumers and is a combination of ingredients, nutrition and sustainability that equates to trust in a product.

"This research study is one component of Kerry's strategic emphasis on consumer expectations in taste and nutrition and will help brands define more effectively their targets for clean label," said Kate Toews, vice-president of strategic marketing at Kerry. "The more we understand consumers' desires, the better we can partner with our customers to embed this knowledge and help them align with their consumers' expectations."

The research focuses on how consumer perceptions can inform the manufacturing, retail, and food service industries in an effort to understand the future of food and beverages. Kerry asked more than 700 American consumers who read ingredient labels to share their opinions on grocery shopping, food consumption and product packaging in an online survey. The survey explored consumers' understanding of clean label and how specific claims, ingredients and packaging influence their purchase decisions.



At Manresa Bread, ingredients change with new crops, harvests and season.

### Global influences

The world is getting smaller, people often say, and in many cases, America's young artisan bakers have gained inspiration to pursue alternative paths because of their experiences traveling abroad.

After multiple stints living and studying in Spain, England, and France, Ms. Ruzicka returned to North Carolina — two semesters short of graduating from UNC Chapel Hill.

"My time abroad had taught me that I enjoyed food, I liked to cook, and made me realize that any part of life could be looked at through the lens of food," she said. "Upon my return to the States, I decided that I would work toward becoming a food writer. One last experience was needed to round out this culinary journey before I focused on putting pen to paper; I needed to work in an actual kitchen."

Within a few months, she had two jobs in local restaurants that were considered fine dining by North Carolina standards at the time. She had the opportunity to work under two very organized and passionate chefs with high standards and realized that she was in love with being in the kitchen. She decided to finish college and move to New York City to go to culinary school.

"I loved the intensity, creativity, and collaboration that came from working in a kitchen and decided to focus on food over food writing," she said.

Shortly thereafter, she enrolled at the French Culinary Institute in New York, where she earned a diploma in culinary arts and the art of international bread baking. Following graduation, Ms. Ruzicka staged at Per Se, working with Master Baker Ben Hershberger, baking for Per Se Restaurant and Bouchon Bakery.

"My greatest skill is my passion, I love and respect the ingredients as much as I love the finished product," she said. "This extra care and attention to detail when baking is what sets us apart at Manresa Bread."

The ingredients, her staff, and other professional bakers are the source of much of her inspiration.

"The ingredients excite me because they are changing with new crops, harvests, and season," she said. "My team at the bakery and in our shops bring so much curiosity to work each day. A desire to create, to be challenged, and a passion for bread drives me to come to work each day determined to make a product better than the day before."

Growing up in the South, Ms. Ruzicka said, her mother made parker house rolls every Thanksgiving, while her father had perfected an exquisite loaf of prune and rye bread with poppy seeds. The family made chocolate chip cookies at least once per week. There was no shortage of baked products in her home, but becoming a baker could not have been further from her mind until she reached her mid-20s.

"One of the greatest successes of my career is my team of bakers and I, not only because we love the process of baking, but also because what we make brings other people joy," she said. "I still find it incredible that people come to my shop and bring our levain, croissants, kouign amann and all the other variations of flour, water, salt and yeast that we create home with them."

Another component of sustainability for artisan bakers involves respect in the workplace. At Sister Pie, Ms. Ludwinski described her company as a triple-bottom-line business, "which means we are working toward serving our employees (and our people), the environment, and the economy. It's not just about the pie, and knowing that we've made a commitment to running a business with a social conscience is what gets me out of bed in the morning."

Moving toward the future, she admits that she would like to realize their triple-bottom-line mission in a very real way.

"One big example is our staff," she said. "We want to offer health benefits and start our employees at a higher wage. We'll do this through growing our wholesale and pie class business."