

# Great bread isn't just made — it's crafted

If bread is the staff of life, then what is excellent, organic European-style hearth bread? It's a ticket to happiness, both in the baking and the eating.

Being a huge fan of bakery breads, I haven't bought a commercial loaf in many years. Read labels and you won't either. Why subject anyone to mediocre-quality items filled with dough conditioners, stabilizers and preservatives when you can support local tradesmen and tradeswomen? I buy from many local bakers. I'm grateful for all of them.

A new addition to the baked goods selection in the market lately has the name 460 Bread. It didn't take long to find out more. Four hundred sixty degrees is the optimum oven temperature to create perfectly crusty loaves.

Driggs, Idaho-based 460 Bread is a partnership between Jerod Pfeffer and Ty Mack, both Renaissance men. It's an interesting place to visit.

Jerod Pfeffer was raised on Scott Air Force Base near St. Louis. When his father retired from the service, the family moved to Winona, Minn., on the Mississippi River. At Montana State University in Bozeman, he majored in electrical engineering and journalism. There he met Sage Hibbard, who was raised hereabouts and brought him here for the first time and who would become his wife.

Pfeffer worked construction to raise college funds, learning skills that supported him as his life evolved. His curiosity led him to timber-frame, dry-stone, straw-bale and straw-clay construction. He and Sage spent 10 years building their house near Felt, Idaho. He wrote a book published by Gibbs-Smith Publishers about natural building and timber-frame homes.

His "route to bread" started in his wood-fired oven in Felt. Pfeffer said his urge for self-sufficiency led him to bake bread every week for two years. To him, it seemed a parallel to the steps of building and wood-working.

"Every week I produced bricks of bread and reams of paper," he said. Scientifically plotting his progress — or lack of it — led him to the

San Francisco Baking Institute. It was a revelation. He took a couple more classes. Bread was his future.

Ty Mack grew up in Lander. In his early years, his mom was a big influence. She cooked and baked. She even milked the cows. He recalls with fondness how she taught him to bake the whole-wheat and oat bread that sustained their household.

He passed through Jackson for ski races here and nearby while still in high school and made friends with Sage Hibbard. At Montana State, he studied geology and met Pfeffer. Mack's degree led him

to the position of deputy tribal water engineer for the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho tribes, with whom he worked on issues such as water rights, mediating ditch disputes and managing a reservoir and canal system. For the state of Vermont, Mack was the fluvial erosion hazards program coordinator, working with communities to use zoning proactively to protect stream corridors and to mitigate flood losses.

For a break, he and his wife, Rose, traveled extensively in South America. In a small surf town in Brazil, their funds had run out. As they questioned their future, they knew it was time to return to the States.

While passing through the Denver International Airport, Mack interviewed for a job with Friends of the Teton River. Hired on as stream-flow restoration director, Mack, with Rose, headed for Teton County, Idaho, in the summer of 2008. He mostly worked with farmers to restore late season streamflows to the river.

The reunion of friends in Teton Valley has been fortuitous. Mack said he "got the bread bug from Jerod." After a stint of getting grounding in the community and stabilizing financially, Mack realized that, rather than save or invest earnings, he would become part of the community economy.

"I wanted to become a local food producer, to create and grow in a tangible way," he said.

"In a global world, this is still local," Pfeffer said. "We take bread out of the ovens in the late morn-



Ty Mack pulls out a fresh-baked batch of rolls from the oven Saturday morning at 460 Bread in Driggs, Idaho.

ing that is in the grocery store that afternoon.

As they moved into the world of commercial baking, both have studied at the San Francisco Baking Institute to learn Old-World skills in a disciplined way. They belong to the Bread Bakers Guild of America. When they found their location, they searched for a Bon Gard French deck oven — it's as big as my kitchen plus dining room — which they found used, 10 years old, in Chicago. Upon its arrival, they spent 10 days assembling it. They created a mill room in which they grind organic whole grains. They researched their sources for the finest quality ingredients.

My feeling is that these are fortunate people. They have an engaging partnership. The two men bake seven days a week, some days lighter for each of them and Sundays for commercial clients only.

I found out from my secret sources that these folks also play music together. Rose plays fiddle, Sage plays clawhammer banjo, Jerod plays guitar and Ty plays mandolin. I also am told Ty Mack is a poet, a cowboy bard of some talent. Their lives are well-rounded and fulfilling. And their business is growing.

Their breads are available at Jackson Whole Grocer, the Aspens Market, Warbirds Cafe, Victor Valley Market, Pearl Street Meat & Fish, Barrels and Bins, Coulour, The Trap Bar, Spoons, Forge, Nosh, the Cheeseburger Factory, Time Out, the garden cafe upstairs at MD Nursery, JH Organics and the online Glory Bowl Soup Company. They love interaction with the public and plan to be at farmers markets this summer. They will provide their goods as part of a share in local CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) including Cosmic Apple and Snowdrift Farms.

When we spoke of recipe sharing, both admitted they are not chefs. They offered to share how they make croustades and crotons from their day-old breads and French toast from their cranberry walnut. My thought reflects the feedback I hear about their breads. There are two opinions: I hear, often in the same sentence: "It's great bread" and "It's expensive." They complied with my wish to demonstrate the time and effort that goes into creating a great loaf of bread.

*Bru writes every other week about the valley's many talented chefs.*

## Olive thyme recipe

Think making bread is a simple process? Think again. It's part science, part art and all painstaking procedure. Below is 460 Bread's methodology. Read it and you will never think of bread the same way again.

### Makes four 500-gram loaves

Although recipes are usually printed using the Imperial system of weights and measures in the News&Guide, the precise measurements reflected here would not translate well to the U.S. system, so we retained the metric.

### Day 1, 6 a.m. — Levain build

54 grams starter, 180 grams flour, 180 grams water (75 degrees)

The olive thyme uses a wild yeast preferment (starter) that is fed twice a day with equal parts organic flour and water. To use the starter in a dough, we take a small portion of it, "build" it up to a larger quantity and ferment it for 4-6 hours before mixing it into the dough.

### 9 a.m. — Prepare and scale ingredients

3 grams fresh thyme, 240 grams kalamata olives, 827 grams organic flour, 0.83 grams dry instant yeast, 20.67 grams salt

We use fresh thyme and plump kalamata olives. The thyme comes in large, twiggy bunches, so we strip away only the tender, fragrant leaves for the bread. The kalamata olives must be soaked in water (so they are not too salty), drained and chopped in half to ensure no pits end up in the bread. At this point we also scale all the

dry ingredients in preparation for mixing. At the heart of these olive thyme loaves is organic flour from Central Milling in Logan, Utah. It is made at a hydropowered mill using organic, hard, red spring wheat from Utah, Idaho and Montana. Unlike many modern flours, it has a lower protein content, similar to the flours that have been used in Europe for centuries to make traditional hearth breads.

### 11 a.m. or whenever the preferment is ripe — Mix dough

Dry ingredients plus 413 grams liquid leavin, 496 grams water, olives and thyme

The time at which the dough is mixed is determined by when the leavin is ripe. When ripe, the leavin is bubbly, tripled in bulk, with a strong, tangy odor. To mix the dough, we combine all the ingredients except the olives and thyme in our spiral mixer. To get the proper results, we need the dough temperature after mixing to be between 73 and 75 degrees, so the exact right temperature water must be used (this varies depending upon the temperature of the room). We mix the dough on first speed to combine the ingredients and then on second speed for several minutes to achieve just the right amount of gluten development without oxidizing the dough (which would sacrifice flavor). Spiral mixers mix dough very gently, with the bowl rotating around a stationary spiral hook. Once the dough is developed, we mix in the kalamata olives and thyme on first speed until they are evenly distributed and transfer the dough into kidded tubs. We record the temperature of the dough so we can cool or warm it slightly (by putting it in a warmer or cooler environment for the bulk fermentation) if the temperature is outside the desired range.

### 11-12:30 — Bulk fermentation

To build strength and flavor, the dough undergoes a 1.5-hour bulk fermentation period at 75 to 80 degrees with one-hand fold

at 45 minutes. The fold will add strength to the dough without any risk of oxidation.

### 12:30 — Divide and preshape

The dough is dumped onto a floured table, divided into 500-gram chunks and gently formed into "boules" (round pre-shapes).

### 1 p.m. — Final shaping

After 30 minutes of rest in a draft-free rack, the preshaped dough balls are reshaped by hand into "batards" (oblong shapes) with a series of gentle, rolling motions and placed, seam-side up, into floured willow baskets. The proofing baskets provide support to the loaf during the long final proof.

### 1 p.m. to 7 a.m., Day 2 — Final proof (rise)

The olive thyme dough spends the next 18 hours slowly proofing at 45 degrees. This extended final proof builds lots of flavor and enhances digestibility.

### Day 2, 7 a.m. — Bake

Finally, 25 hours after the process began, the olive thyme loaves are floured, scored (the top surface sliced with a razor blade) and gently transferred onto the masonry hearth of our imported French steam tube deck oven. After an intense injection of steam, the loaves will bake for about 24 minutes at 460 degrees (of course!). Our 12,000-pound oven produces amazing results. The high-temperature masonry deck and plentiful steam combine to allow the loaves to double in size in the first several minutes of the bake, a phenomenon called "oven spring." Late in the bake, as the loaves take on a deep golden brown color, maillard reactions create flavor compounds that are driven deep into the loaf, giving it complex, intense flavors not found in lightly baked loaves produced in a cooler oven.