

SOURDOUGH: THE HEALTHY BREAD REVOLUTION



Stephen Pinnuck

ISS Institute/TAFE Fellowship

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Executive Summary

Over a career of more than twenty years Stephen Pinnuck has gained a breadth of experience and knowledge in both large commercial and small production bakeries. Experience in areas such as product development, industry consultation and bakery teaching has enabled Pinnuck to stay abreast of continual changes within the Baking Industry.

The purpose of the Fellowship was to undertake an overseas study program in Canada, the USA and Europe, to gain a comprehensive understanding in the field of sourdough production and preparation, production and processing technologies, in relationship to the Baking Industry.

The Australian Artisan Baking Industry is a small, but growing part of the overall Australian Baking Industry. Current trends suggest that the industry is slowly moving on from its fast pace mass production, back to the original style of baking based on superior quality and greater health benefits derived from artisan and sourdough products. The faster we move into a mass produced baking era the more we look back and realise how good we used to make artisan and sourdough breads. The increase in popularity and, thus, production of artisan breads including sourdough, is being driven by consumers requiring a healthy alternative to the standard products being offered in the marketplace.

Artisan and sourdough baking throughout Canada, the USA and Europe have developed into a large and expanding market. Each country has a very diverse baking industry and are leaders in their field. By investigating overseas methods and knowledge, the aim was to return to Australia equipped with knowledge and ideas to advise, instruct, promote, improve, complement and add to the overall acceptance of artisan and sourdough principles in this country.

The Fellowship Program included visits to establishments and meetings with individuals involved in the sourdough and artisan baking industries.

On completion of the Fellowship trip, the main thing that struck Pinnuck was the disjointed approach that Australia's Baking Industry and learning institutions have in the artisan and sourdough bread areas.

Each experienced baker, manufacturer and educator that Pinnuck met overseas had outstanding skills and knowledge. Finding a way of broadcasting this artisan knowledge is critical for the Australian industry to prosper. Key areas such as the science and techniques in producing sourdough can be best approached in a joint effort from the entire industry.

In Australia there are state Baking Industry bodies that provide limited support to their members with no real guidance, at a grass roots level. Pinnuck strongly believes that these industry associations should be providing technical assistance in the form of a highly qualified and experienced industry specialist to be the face of our local Baking Industry. For a skilled Australian artisan baker to exist in 20 years time it is essential that we have to commit far more training, resources and mentoring of Australians wishing to learn and develop these baking skills. Australia loses far too many experienced bakers out of the trade for a number of reasons. These include wages, working conditions and a lack of further education and training being available.

Selected Australian TAFE institutions at present do embrace the delivery of training in the artisan baking areas, however, they are all working from a training package in need of an overhaul. The current training package for 'Produce Artisan Breads' needs to be upgraded in a number of areas mentioned previously to reflect current customer trends.

We have talented, gifted, passionate bakers within our shores. We need the high level training at a master artisan level and the mindset to lift, recognise and celebrate them as 'stars' of our industry.