



## WHERE ARE ALL THE BAKERS?

And where do you find good bakers? Praying can't hurt. Luck is always useful. Is the local baking school just teaching cake decorating? You haven't found anything that really works, even poaching bakers can backfire on you big time.

Many bakeries are seeing a changing demographic and a more educated customer, who choose to buy quality breads from local bakers. It has become increasingly difficult for bakeries to find help to meet the demand. Skilled bakers are in short supply and training new ones is both time consuming and expensive with the great possibility that the investment you made in someone can simply walk out the door.



What is happening, doesn't anyone want to be a baker? We all remember the persuading of our parents to become a doctor or a lawyer, rather than a farmer or a baker, shunning the blue collar for the white have made manual jobs passé. The schools are doing their best to attract students but students often follow the popularity of culinary programs or being the next 'cake boss'.



We are hearing this more & more from many artisan & retail bakers all across the country, be it in big cities or small towns. It's a bigger issue that is sweeping the globe, not only in this country but with increasing affluence, Mexico, Panama, Australia, India and even in China, the trend is growing. The potential workforce has become more sedentary and more interested in their smart phones and iPads than doing the hard work of a baker.

As the employable pool of workers shrink, more bakeries are hiring new staff that have little baking experience, who never baked with mom or even tasted good bread. The "harsh economics" of running a bakery, it is important to bring these new people up to speed as soon as possible. Many have never worked with their hands before and the skill required to shape baguettes is an art in itself and many try but few excel. In many bakeries quality suffers as it changes drastically from day to day, day shift to night shift, employee to employee, and whether the boss is looking or not. Moreover, the current flightiness of employees where the average employment period is less than two years, and many cases, much, much less. After a couple of paychecks many new staff are gone and the training cycle begins again. Many companies find that they need to hire three to keep one.

What good is using high quality flour, long fermentation times and wonderful hearth ovens when the new guy on the bench can't shape a baguette properly, someone forgot the salt, the cashier is moody and the customer never comes back? It is unfortunate that more training cannot be done. Being on the bench may be enjoyable but when you realize that you are not going out marketing your breads to a local restaurant or perfecting the formula of the new product you should be working on or finding a replacement for the third mixer guy this season, your business stagnates.

## CONTROLLING LABOR COSTS

Baking, no matter how small or how large is basically a manufacturing business, (i.e., to make, craft or process a raw material into a finished product) and as such, the labor required to transform flour, water, yeast & salt into bread is a major part cost of your product. Reducing your costs of production is essential to the long term survivability and growth of your business. Bakers have little control of the high flour and ingredient prices and things like utility costs, rent and labor rates are all pretty well fixed but you do have control of improvements to your bakery. The only option remaining is to become more efficient. A recent Bloemhof customer reports that his new Bloemhof Bread & Roll Moulder increased his dough forming capacity by as much as 600% over hand forming! Doing more with less staff or growing your business and expanding your customer base with some wholesale accounts or taking on another Farmer's Market are all doable with the proper equipment.



There are better and more efficient ovens, compact ingredient handling systems, gentler dividers and bread moulders that are designed for artisan doughs. These are one time purchases that save labor, reduce training time, speed up production and produce more consistent breads. The labor savings can shorten your work day, reduce costs, and allow you to find and retain staff that find the work easier and more enjoyable with less effort required. A simple powered bowl lift can lift 300 pounds of dough quickly and effortlessly, eliminating back strain while allowing a smaller employee to take on more tasks. Take a serious look at your slicing, packaging and labeling area and evaluate the workflow. This often neglected area can have very high labor unit costs that can delay deliveries can consume a large portion of your available space. At the same time, improvements in your efficiency allow your more time to train staff on advanced baking techniques, connect with customers and keep in top of cleaning and sprucing up the bakery.



In an efficient bakery, once the daily pressure of getting bread into the oven is met, there is ample time to train the important hand techniques and skills required in a more relaxed atmosphere. For those who need to grow to the next level without sacrificing quality there are alternatives.

Bloemhof Inc. has long been committed to bringing you the highest quality bakery equipment at competitive prices. We have been designing and manufacturing bakery equipment since 1960 and have an excellent reputation worldwide. Our equipment is favoured by artisan bakers, small to intermediate wholesale, retail, franchise, in-store bakeries as well as restaurant and hotel operations.



*Knead  
Help?*



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**Call Toll Free 1-888-411-2131**

**Bloemhof Inc.** 74 MacDonald St., Kirkland, Quebec, Canada H9J 3Z7

info@bloemhof.com 1-514-505-3922

**Bloemhof USA Inc.** 1215 S. Swaner Rd., Salt Lake City, Utah, 84104

info@bloemhofusa.com 1-801-428-2770