



Mr Christoforou has worked for Bakers Maison since 2005 and has been involved with the food and baking industries for over 30 years. Bakers Maison is a Sydney based company, supplying nationally and internationally for more than 10 years.

## CROISSANT PRODUCTION

By Nick Christoforou, Bakers Maison

Sales of croissants saw a sharp spike in popularity last year, with demand increasing through the final two quarters of 2009. At Bakers Maison we employ a work force of almost 50 people, having now put on another shift to manage the increase in production levels with distribution to every state. Achieving this amount of product while maintaining quality through hand-made production requires a combination of training, organisation and attention to detail.

Much of my knowledge on the subject of croissants is based on personal experience and what I have learnt from other bakers. I was lucky enough to have an uncle in the baking trade teach me all he knew and I also learnt from fellow bakers. I was able to work with Don and Matt Harper of Bamboo Bakery in the 90s, first and second generation bakers, who were trained and still follow traditional methods. Don has now been baking for over 65 years.

Many people in Australia eat croissants for breakfast on special occasions but they are a versatile product for everyday use. They can be eaten plain as a snack, sweet with jam or as a savory filled with ham and cheese. Croissants are a significant portion of our

range and can be purchased unproven, ready to bake or fully baked frozen in various weights and sizes. This makes them a product that is not only used by bakeries of all sizes but also hotels, convenience stores, coffee shops and airlines.

The earliest stories about croissants date back to 1683 during the Ottoman Turks siege of Vienna with the belief the crescent shape was the crest on the Turkish flag. I am not entirely sure if this is a myth or not, but it has become a part of the story of the croissant. The first croissant recipe was published in 1891 but it wasn't the same kind of croissant we are familiar with today. The first recipe that would produce what we consider to be a flaky croissant wasn't published in France until 1905. By the 1920s the laminated croissant was known as the French croissant.

A croissant should have a flaky texture on the outside and a honeycombed interior (cell structure). This is achieved by a combination of correct lamination between the layers of pastry and butter, proper rest, proving times and care when baking to ensure the perfect croissant. The perfect croissant has a unique flaky texture, is crescent shaped in appearance and has a golden buttery taste.

After accurately weighing all ingredients, and mixing to correct pastry temperature, to ensure proper lamination bakers should:

- ensure the pastry block is the exact weight every time;
- the percentage of butter must be the exact amount every time;
- the folding method must be consistent, with the same number of folds carried out every time;
- rest time is critical between folds; and
- the temperature of the work environment is crucial. Too hot an environment will result in a difficult to handle product and less than perfect croissants.

Using the traditional French method of making croissants has helped increase our sales of croissants. It is possible to mass-produce croissants containing 100 per cent butter, no substitutes or flavorings and a time-honoured method of production with minimal automation. This achieves a fantastic internal texture and a supreme taste and flakiness. I recommend bakers think about how they can use the common croissant to increase their sales.

## PASTRY WORLD CUP

This April 'Team Pastry Australia' will compete in the Asian Pastry Cup in Singapore in a bid to be selected for the World Pastry Cup in 2011. A teacher and his student have reunited to take on the pastry world, with Sydney pastry supremo, Adriano Zumbo joining forces with Hunter Valley pastry chef and teacher, Dean Gibson to take on 10 Asian countries in Singapore. They will be joined by Strathfield-based Continental Patisserie manager, Jain Yao as they prepare for Singapore. Ten Asian countries will compete over a two day period for eight hours producing a sugar and chocolate sculpture, 12 desserts and two gateaux. The top three teams will represent Asia Pacific at the 2011 Coupe du Monde de la Patisserie, 'World Pastry Cup', the premier pastry completion in the world. "As Australia gets into soccer world cup preparations this team faces similar odds," Mr Gibson told *Baking Business*.

"We go up against China, Singapore and Taiwan which have very experienced and well funded teams. We will need to be prepared to qualify for France."

Mr Gibson specialises in chocolate work and dessert while Balmain's Zumbo Patisserie owner, Adriano Zumbo will concentrate on sugar work and cake.

Both pastry chefs have previous international experience. Adriano represented Australia in the 2005 Pastry World Cup in France and Dean has competed in France and Japan and in 2009 came second in the world in Italy

at the world Artisan Baking Cup.

As part of their preparation the team brought 2009 USA pastry chef of the year, Anil Rohira to Australia to train Zumbo and Gibson.

"Anil is world class and has joined forces with chef Ewald Notter at the Notter School of Pastry Arts based in Orlando, Florida," Mr Gibson said.

With just a few months of intensive training left, both Mr Zumbo and Mr Gibson must develop and create their cake, sugar and chocolate masterpieces.

"We trialled the dessert and cake and, without giving too much away, the cake was a combination of chocolate mousse, green chilli, lime and cucumber jelly and macadamia foamed brulee," he said.

"Being a Zumbo-inspired cake it will test the levels of what is sweet and savoury and is sure to surprise the international judging panel in Singapore."

The team of pastry chefs are looking to attract professionals and sponsors to become involved in Australia's bid for the 2011 Pastry World Cup in France.

Besides winning the competition, the team also hopes to increase awareness of pastry cooking within the industry and develop a network of pastry chefs for future events and demonstrations.

"We want to elevate the stature and status of professional pastry chefs in Australia and internationally by being competitive against the rest of the world," Mr Gibson said.

For more information on supporting the team call Jian Yao on (02) 97426377.



(Pictured left to right): Team Pastry Australia members Dean Gibson, Adriano Zumbo and manager Jain Yao.

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