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**TOP TEN BREAD
BAKERS 2011**
presented by



2011 Top Ten Bread Bakers in America

presented by



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For the second year, *Dessert Professional* has tapped into the world of artisan bread to name the Top Ten Bread Bakers in America. This group of distinguished bakers has mastered the art and technique of creating the perfect loaf—that elusive combination of flavor, texture and appearance. Though their backgrounds and approaches to baking may differ, one characteristic was common to all the bakers on our list: their willingness to share recipes and information and to teach others about their craft, with the communal goal of improving the quality of bread in America. Following is a short profile of each of our Top Ten Bread Bakers in America, as well as recipes.



Gregory Bortz

The Denver Bread Company

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Business profile: The Denver Bread Company was founded in December of 1994 with the simple idea that nurturing people with quality bread made with clean, pure ingredients, made one at a time by hand, would be a great addition to the culinary community in Colorado. It is a small artisan bread shop focused on European style sourdough method country breads. Our goal is to provide freshly baked bread to the surrounding communities and restaurants using the best ingredients and raw materials available to us. We also now offer an amazing line of artisan cookies made onsite by Kristy Greenwood of Victory Love and Cookies.

How it all began: I began making bread in various forms in the 1970's as I began my restaurant career. Since running kitchens involves all aspects of production, I was always especially interested in the baking and pastry side of the kitchen.

Signature products: The boule, our sourdoughs, focaccia and seasonal specialty breads.

Best compliment you've ever received about your bread: At times, some of our European and well-traveled customers will comment that our bread is better than what they get in Europe or that it reminds them of the bread they grew up with in Europe, or simply that it is the best there is. Those are all incredibly flattering compliments, however, when the bakery opened back in the day, there was a very old, small grocery store called BJ's up the block that was there mostly to sell cigarettes, cat food and toilet paper. Most

neighborhoods have a store like this. In those early days I would get customers who would quite literally walk down to the bakery after using their food stamps at the store to stock their cupboards with who-knows-what, and they would somehow have managed to save enough of their money to buy our bread. Under-privileged people, who could have easily bought a bag of day-old sliced white bread for 30 cents, made the effort and spent the extra money on our bread. I always took that as pretty high praise.

Best part of the bread business: At the end of each day there is that sense of satisfaction that you've contributed to people's lives by helping nurture a community. Feeding people and turning them on to great flavors, or something they may have never had before, has always been a big part of working with food for me. Being a small, independent business owner working in the culinary community with other like-minded owners is also great. The friendships and relationships you form along the way are priceless.

If you weren't making bread, what would you be doing? I would probably be playing music on some street corner or at the D.A.V. [Disabled American Veterans] on Friday nights for nickels and dimes, or I'd be in prison. And then again there's always taxidermy. The truth is, I fell into the food world because I needed a job at a very early age, and it instantly became the most natural work environment I could imagine. I was good at what I was doing, and the pay, for the most part, was never too bad. I kept telling myself that this was a good place to be while I was deciding what I wanted to be when I grew up. Thirty-seven years later, I still haven't grown up, but I can absolutely tell you that the restaurant/bakery world has been and continues to be an amazing path for me.

If you had to characterize yourself as a type of bread, what would you be? Probably the Boule. I tend to have a pretty thick outer crust (tough skinned) with some nasty sharp edges at times. Once you gain entry to what's inside, which isn't always the easiest thing to do, you can find a soft, more tender persona. (Depending on the day.)

What's next? I've been one of those very fortunate people for a very long time now who gets to get up each day and go do what I love to do. I've always worked very hard to make it in this business this long. I'd like to keep that going for as long as I can. After that, playing drums in some geezer rock band on Friday nights and baking brioche at home for the family on Sunday mornings and perhaps even doing a small run of boules once a week for the neighbors out of the wood oven out back doesn't sound too bad.

What direction do you see the bread industry heading? Although what we do each day at the bakery is a part of a very old craft, you would be surprised at the number of young people that show passion for bread baking. I would like to think that people like this all over the world will continue what was started many thousands of years ago. I see it in the way they approach baking that a true interest exists in the pursuit of excellent bread. I hope to see the opening of more small independent shops like mine, run by interesting, creative people doing their own take on what has been the most basic part of our sustenance throughout many parts of the planet, seemingly forever, BREAD!



Rosemary Focaccia

Yield: Ten 12-oz focaccia

64 liq oz/1.92 lt cold filtered water
6 lb, 8 oz/2.948 kg organic high-gluten bread flour
4 oz/113 g organic whole wheat flour
2 oz/57 g kosher salt
5 oz/142 g dry active yeast
4 liq oz/120 ml extra-virgin olive oil
0.75 oz/21 g chopped fresh rosemary
Extra virgin olive oil
Coarse sea salt
Freshly ground pepper
Crushed dry red chiles

1. Preheat oven to 400 to 425°F
2. Place the water in a mixing bowl. Add the bread flour, whole wheat flour, salt and yeast. Mount the bowl on the mixer and using the hook attachment, begin mixing the ingredients together at a low speed. Just as the ingredients begin to hydrate, stop the mixer and add the olive oil and rosemary. Continue mixing on a low speed until the dough has come together and developed to a uniform, smooth, elastic mass. This should take approximately 7 minutes depending on the equipment you are using and weather or not the dough has been kneading properly in the mixer.
3. At this point let the dough rest covered for 15 minutes. This will help the liquid absorb into the dry ingredients at a more even rate.
4. After the rest period, begin mixing the dough again at a

slightly faster speed. The dough should finish developing in about 5 to 6 minutes at this rate. Remove the bowl from the mixer and let the dough rest covered, until has not quite doubled in mass. You only need to let it proof to about 80% greater than its original size. This time period will vary from kitchen to kitchen, depending on the environment.

5. Once your dough has achieved proper volume, you can turn it out on a wood surface to begin working with it. Divide the dough into 12-oz. portions. Loosely form each piece into a uniform ball and place them on heavy, lined baking sheets that have been brushed with olive oil. Then brush each piece of dough with olive oil. At this time let the dough rest again until it has once again grown to 80% greater than its original volume.

6. Again this time period will vary. Now dock each piece of dough, using your fingers to flatten the dough pieces into rustic looking 10-inch rounds. Brush each round liberally with olive oil. Garnish the tops with a sprinkling of sea salt, black pepper, and crushed, dry red chiles.

7. The focaccia is now ready for its final proof period. Let it again rise, covered until it is not quite doubled in size. Put each sheet tray in the oven and bake them to a light golden brown. Remove them from the oven and let them cool to the point where they can be handled. I always prefer that focaccia be served hot. You can always prepare these ahead of time and reheat them before serving. And yes, it's nice to accompany them with even more extra-virgin olive oil and some quality balsamic vinegar.

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