

## Baker of the Year

### Greg Bortz

Baker-Owner The Denver Bread Company  
thedenverbreadcompany.com

**ROOTS:** Ithaca, New York

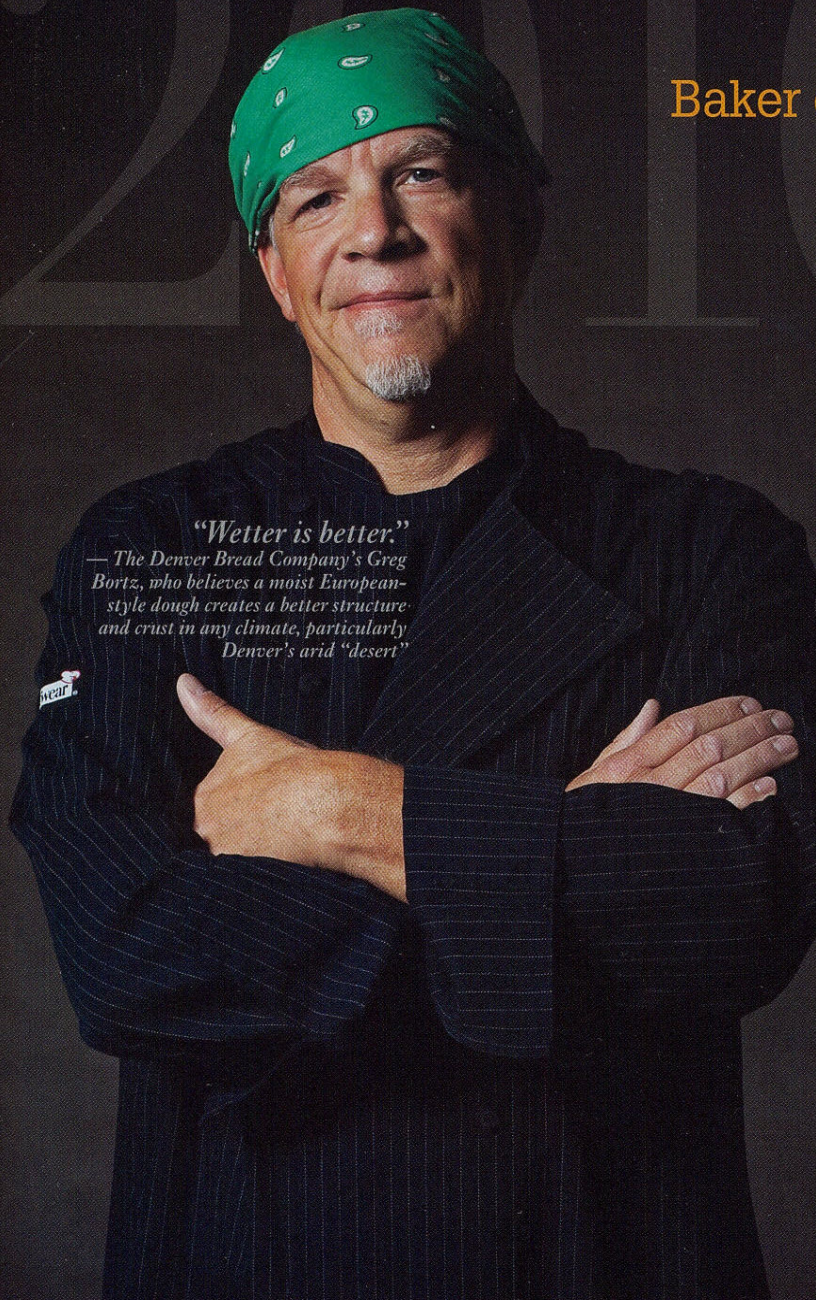
**CLASSROOMS:** California Culinary Academy

**OVENS:** Mini Deli in Ithaca, New York; Caffè Art e Mestieri in Reggio Emilia, Italy; Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California; Winston's Seafood Grille & Bar and Q's in Boulder; Barolo Grill, Mel's Restaurant and Bar, and The Denver Bread Company in Denver

**WHY HE'S OUR WINNER:** Greg Bortz (no relation to Baker of the Year finalist Michael Bortz) was touring the country on his motorcycle when he wound up on the Front Range. "I literally ran out of gas and money in Boulder," he says. Bortz floated through Colorado restaurant jobs just as aimlessly until, at 30 years old, he decided to attend culinary school in the San Francisco Bay Area. "I thought that was the mecca of food in the Western world." It was a fortuitous choice — a chance meeting with Alice Waters ultimately landed him a job at her restaurant, Chez Panisse, where he worked from 1989 to 1991, some of the Berkeley institution's most influential years. Later, back in Colorado, Bortz took pastry positions at Barolo Grill and Mel's Restaurant and Bar, where he recognized Denver's need for better bread. Fifteen years ago this fall, he founded his bakery. Today, Bortz has Czech, Polish, German, Russian, and Italian customers from Leadville, Breckenridge, Steamboat, Cheyenne, and Pueblo. Chefs at Venue, Potager, and Mateo are equally passionate about his loaves — though he's never solicited a single restaurant customer and passes on requests for items such as burger buns that cloud his singular focus on being a larger-loaf bakery, prized for its wetter, three-day doughs. We love Bortz's European recipes and approach to life.

*"Wetter is better."*

— The Denver Bread Company's Greg Bortz, who believes a moist European-style dough creates a better structure and crust in any climate, particularly Denver's arid "desert"





## Greg Bortz

### First thing he ever baked:

Oatmeal-raisin cookies from the recipe on the top of a Quaker Oats box at age 7. **Birthday party that changed his life:** Food writer M.F.K. Fisher's. He was a volunteer cook, and he met influential chef Alice Waters, for whom he later worked.

### Where he found the bakery's

**first oven:** In the alley behind The

Denver Athletic Club. **His retail-to-**

**restaurant ratio:** 50:50. **Signature**

**bread:** The boules. **Bread that's in**

**season now:** Hatch-chile focaccia.

**Best time to buy bread in Denver:**

The day after a cloudy day, when it's not so dry. **Favorite bread**

**book:** *Bread Alone*. **Favorite tool:**

"My hands."

