



*Photo credit: Jonas Gustavsson*

### A Look Behind the Loaf with Joe Bowie: A Locally & Globally Minded "Bread Head"

"A Look Behind the Loaf" is a blog series designed to highlight and elevate the unique voices, stories and experiences of BIPOC professionals across the artisan baking community. If you'd like to suggest someone to feature in the future please reach out to [vherico@gmail.com](mailto:vherico@gmail.com)

**Q: Tell us about who you are - Your background, how and why you got into this profession and what you are working on/where you are working today?**

**A:** I am Joe Bowie from Lansing, Michigan. I graduated from Brown University with a degree in English and American Lit. with a special concentration in African-American Poetry. I was a professional modern dancer in NYC for 25-ish years before I transitioned into baking artisan bread after receiving a grant to attend culinary school. Artisan bread baking seemed like alchemy to me; by manipulating four ingredients I could make magical loaves.

Presently, I am a Lecturer in the Dance Program at Northwestern University and generally bake bread when my husband and I need it or as a gift to family, friends, and colleagues.

**Q: Tell us about your journey in this industry. What have been some of the highs that have driven your passion for the craft?**

**A:** I decided to go to culinary school to study artisan bread baking after a 25+ year modern dance career in NYC. A few highs have been: teaching in the program from which I had graduated (full-circle), starting my own community-supported bakery (Cola Bread Club), and creating the bread and pastry program for the opening of an all-day cafe (Small Sugar). I love being creative and developing recipes!

**Q: On the flipside, what are some of the challenges you have overcome to be where you are today?**

**A:** It was sometimes difficult to be a Black-identifying, gay man in the artisan baking industry which is very white and very straight. I didn't see many reflections of myself which was, at times, quite disheartening.

**Q: What is the next career milestone you hope to reach?**

**A:** Actually, my next career milestone has nothing to do with baking. I'm a dance educator in higher education and hope to either attend graduate school to get my MFA (Master of Fine Arts) or CMA (Certified Movement Analyst) degree/certification in the not too distant future.

**Q: Who or what do you look to for inspiration? Is there a specific source you recommend?**

**A:** I look to my immediate family for inspiration. There is always more to learn in all aspects of our lives from other bakers, artists, etc. . . But my family always supports me both creatively and unconditionally.

**Q: Based on your personal experiences, what advice would you offer to other BIPOC bakers entering this industry?**

**A:** Based on my personal experiences, I would advise them to work towards starting their own businesses which ensures diverse visions and missions. Be your own boss!

**Q: What would you like to see happen in the industry in the next few years as it relates to diversifying representation and creating an inclusive environment?**

**A:** I would love to see more representation and visibility of BIPOC bakers, farmers, and millers. We are making some very important strides forward, but there are still many who are excluded from the "picture." The majority of the hands we see baking artisan bread are still white.

**Q: What can the BBGA do to help better foster that change?**

**A:** The Diversity and Inclusion Committee is a good start. I hope that the BBGA will recognize that EQUITY is paramount and bring more BIPOC professionals into leadership positions. As it stands, the Board (unless there are changes in the works) continues to be mostly white.

**Q: And the most important question of all, what's your favorite bread to eat or make at the moment?**

**A:** I've really been diggin' my Sourdough Spelt Focaccia with flaky sea salt and cracked black pepper. My husband loves it, as well.

**Stay in touch with Joe via instagram:** [@brooklynbreadnerd](https://www.instagram.com/brooklynbreadnerd)

***About Joe Bowie:***

*After 20+ years as a professional dancer, Joe studied at the International Culinary Center where he quickly fell in love with the chemistry and art of baking bread, and went on to complete the ICC's professional artisan bread baking course. He has worked for Le Pain Quotidien, Chef Daniel Boulud, Dean & DeLuca, and Sadelle's and has taught artisan bread baking for the ICC, and Bleecker Street Bakery for which he developed baking classes and signature baked goods. He also started his own micro bakery Cola Bread Club, and partnered in the opening of Small Sugar, a cafe for which he was the Director of Bread and Pastry. He now lives in Chicago and teaches modern dance at Northwestern University.*

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