



*Shaping the knowledge and skills of the artisan
baking community through education since 1993*

Try This At Home Series

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Baking Ambassadors

Mitch Stamm, Jerod Pfeffer and Michael Rhoads

Jerod Pfeffer and Michael Rhoads are fierce competitors in baking and in business. Jerod was the captain of the BBGA Baking Team USA 2020. Michael was on the BBGA Baking Team USA that won the Gold Medal at Sigep 2011. At first glance, the results differ dramatically; one podium finish and one off the podium finish. With time, I'm sure both would agree that the results are not so disparate.

The glory that comes from competitions is fleeting. So is the disappointment. I can tell you more about one of those than the other. Knowing you did your best and that the jury has its own perspective can be difficult to reconcile if the results do not mirror your expectations. Proportionately, and with time, the good memories become stronger as the unpleasant memories fade. Eventually, it becomes possible to laugh about some of the memories you had hoped to forget. In life and at work, Jerod and Michael personify the lasting rewards of competition. They are evidence that the camaraderie derived from training with teammates and baking alongside other bakers representing their countries is worth the sweat, travel, and lack of sleep. They are ambassadors for professionals to keep challenging themselves. They are both such great guys that their baking acumen and prowess are ancillary

considerations. Their baking will not be forgotten, but it is their spirit that will be remembered. Both have been good friends to the Guild. One nagging board member is always asking them to do something. They never say no. At least not out loud.

Gentlemen,
Until we bake again
Mitch

Jerod Pfeffer

I cannot think of another person I would want to represent the United States of America. Whether at a baking competition or the United Nations, he would be my first choice. I met Jerod in 2015 during the tryouts for Baking Team USA 2016. His skills and knowledge were obvious, but what shone was his demeanor. Jerod models civility and good manners with grace and ease. Even his posture expresses respect and dignity. He is a natural leader. A stoic and taciturn composure belies his fierce competitive nature. If Rudyard Kipling had known Jerod, he would have written "If" for him. And then, there is his sense of humor. As corny as Kansas in August, his delivery is so deadpan and so dry you could scrape the dust off his ad libs and jokes. And they just keep coming.

Michael Rhoads

Michael's skills and knowledge are deeper than the quantum theory of physics. He's had a multi-faceted career as an educator, baker, and consultant to bakeries of all missions and sizes. Gluten free, artisan, small shop, large production, wood-fired, Viennoiserie – all within his millhouse. Global markets, weather/soil conditions, crop futures, trends – all part of baking to this guy. After a long day at IBIE, a sizable group of us was walking to dinner. We ran into Michael. Thank goodness. We ended up in an overpriced Italian restaurant, the pretension more layered than the lasagna and thicker than the red sauce that had been reheated for the nth time. We didn't know it when we ran into him, but we were bringing our floor show. And master of ceremonies. I learned a lot at that dinner: about baking, about business, that a Negroni is not an Italian car, and what spraying club soda out of your nose because you're laughing so hard feels like.

Coupe du Monde de la Boulangerie 2020

Jerod: January 11, 2020 feels like a million years ago. So much has changed in our lives and businesses during the last three months. There remains, however, a strong desire for fresh bread. I have more and more new-to-baking friends calling to ask about their sluggish starter, flat loaves, tight crumb. This much is true: bread is a worthy challenge.

I am reminded of that day in January. On this chilly Paris pre-dawn morning coach Nicky Giusto, Kathryn Goodpaster, Nicolas Zimmermann and I were waiting outside the convention center where the Coupe du Monde de la Boulangerie would soon begin. In less than a hour, our last year of work would be tested on the world's biggest stage for baking.

I had a few moments to reflect on the dual nature of the Coupe. On the one hand, it demands innovation—new flavors, new presentations. The other side is demonstrating mastery of known products. The baguette is the baguette. The ingredients and formula are basically the same everywhere in the world. The final product, however, is not.

I recall one of our team mentors responding to my "new" baguette formula: "It doesn't have to be complicated or unique; it has to be PERFECT"!

For me, this is the heart of baking—humility, understanding, commitment to learning.

Pain au Levain

Like the baguette, Pain au Levain is all about process. It has simple ingredients and relies on a healthy starter, mature levain, proper mixing and fermentation, appropriate shaping, precise proofing, gentle transfer and scoring, a mass oven, and time to cool.

Note: I really enjoyed working with high-extraction (T80) flour from Central Milling during the Team USA practices. In the United States we tend to think of flour as either white or whole wheat. White flour is simply whole wheat flour with much of the bran sifted out. It is possible, and more common in France, to produce flours with a range of bran content—everything in between white and whole wheat.

IBIE 2019

Michael: The Farmer Miller Baker relationship constantly drives me to create new breads. I remember the first time I saw a spelt loaf. I was in Montana trying to convince a baker in the Bitterroot Mountains to hire me with no experience. (He rightfully had me start in the dish room and the woodshed. I would barely earn the right to shape a loaf of bread at this job.) One of his specialties was a spelt bread which mostly reminded me of a door stop instead of a pleasing loaf. This "door stop" would keep making appearances at the different bakeries I would find myself in and I always wondered why nobody tried to make more appealing loaf.

The first time I tried making a hundred percent spelt bread I discovered the challenges of working with this stubborn grain. It turns out that even with a high degree of finesse and caring it is difficult to create a tasty, aesthetic loaf. My solution at first was to use it as a flavor enhancer and marketing tool at only 10 to 15 percent of the total flour weight. Deep down inside I always felt this was a cop out and I wanted to develop a loaf that truly featured this ancient grain.

While visiting the Ardent Mills booth at IBIE I discovered that they had a new twist to this ancient grain. Spelt is a challenge for the miller since it requires the extra step of dehulling before milling. The Ardent Mills team put a new spin on spelt by using their ultrafine milling process to create super fine whole grain flour that improved the absorption properties of spelt while creating a softer, more enjoyable crumb. In my mind I thought that this milling process might also reduce the typical mixing damage from the bran particles. I made some notes and ordered a sample to play with upon my return to Colorado.

When my sample arrived, I was pleased to see a second unexpected sample of sifted spelt flour. It was time to create a hundred percent spelt loaf I could be proud of. My first round of testing highlighted the naturally bitter flavor of spelt, which while pleasing to me, could potentially be off putting to the general public. I did not want to fall into the artisan baker trap of adding honey to my whole grain so I rummaged through the pantry looking for a suitable sweetener that did not feel like a crutch. Out of the corner of my eye I spied the carrots and a promising idea formed. Many rejected tests later I settled upon this satisfying recipe that I hope you will enjoy.

This an especially great loaf to create when your CSA overwhelms your pantry with carrots. You can make the puree in large batches and freeze for use in the future bakes. The supply of spelt can be erratic causing inconsistency in the flour available to the baker. Hydration and mixing method adjustment will need to be made based upon your supply of spelt flour. The sifted spelt flour can be replaced with a more traditional bread flour with a slight increase in the final dough hydration.

Happy baking,
Michael Rhoads
Buttered Toast Consulting