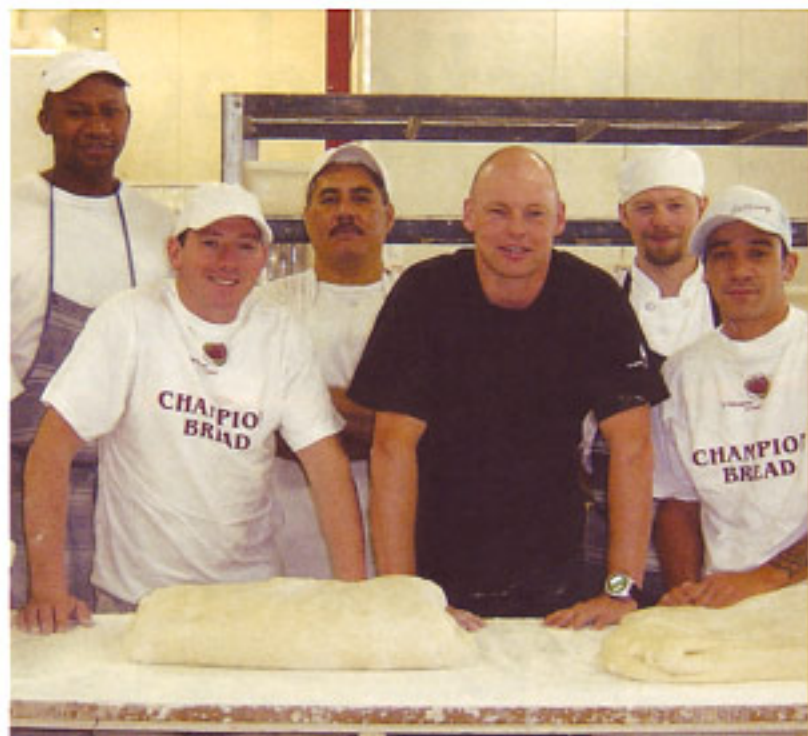




The national bi-monthly news magazine serving the people in the alternative foodservice industry



## The art of bread

*As a young chef in his native Denmark Michael Klausen always took pleasure in baking his own bread for the kitchen. After working at the helm of iconic Sydney eateries such as The Bayswater Brasserie and The Boathouse, he has returned to his early culinary love, crafting superb artisanal bread at the boutique Brasserie Bread bakery.*

Michael Klausen (centre in black) with his team.

**Q: Where did the idea of an artisan bakery comes from?**

A: When I was working with Tony Papas at the Bayswater Brasserie we started experimenting with bread varieties. We quickly realised that, judging from the response from Brasserie customers, there was huge consumer interest in good quality, freshly baked breads. I'd always enjoyed making bread, but during this time my interest really grew. We could see there was a big niche market that was not being filled and, since Tony and I worked very well together, we decided to open a small bakery in Waterloo for a hobby.

**Q: You described the Waterloo bakery as a "hobby", but in reality, it must have been a fairly major undertaking?**

A: Yes, it proved to be. We didn't really know what we were doing to be honest. We had to educate ourselves — and our staff - as we went along. Baking bread the way we do is not like working at Bakers Delight where you add water to a packet of pre mix and that's it. We spent hours experimenting with different recipes, trying to find out what worked and what didn't. Initially, I had a baker in charge of selecting what bread varieties to make. Before long, though, I felt we weren't always making the right choices and I ended up intervening and dropping some of our original produce lines and adding new ones. The bakery proved to be very successful, so much so that we quickly moved to larger premises and I realised I couldn't work in the restaurant and still devote sufficient attention to the bakery. So I opted to work in the bakery full time.

**Q: You make a wide variety of breads, everything from caramelised garlic bread through to schiacciata. Your organic sourdough is probably your signature loaf though isn't it?**

A: Yes, it's our most popular line and the one which I probably enjoy making the most. Sourdough is fascinating. It requires a living yeast culture which is fed and kept alive by the bakers. We are still using the same ferment we started with. Over the years I've discovered that sourdough can be quite versatile too, I've started using it as a batter for pancakes which we serve in the cafe attached to the bakery.

There is always a lot of product development going on in my mind. We're trying more spelt products and more wholemeal at the moment to see what the reaction will be to those.

**Q: What's the biggest attraction of your products — the taste or the fact that they are chemical and preservative free and largely organic?**

A: The taste is probably the primary attraction — once people have tried it they realise that commercially mass produced breads just can't compare. But the health aspect is also a big factor. People are really interested in health these days and they are increasingly educated about what they should and should not eat. Our breads contain no chemicals, people really like that. The interest in health also means that people are increasingly prepared to pay \$5.00 for a loaf of bread if they know it's handmade and healthy. Our products look beautiful too, they are made with a real sense of aesthetics. People also appreciate buying something that had been made with care and attention.

One of the major Sydney shopping centres has recently opened a Growers Market; a collection of fresh food stalls that actually stands just outside of a Coles Supermarket. What's interesting is that people will go into Coles and buy what they need, and then come out and buy bread from us, organic fruit and vegies from someone else. Even though Coles is cheaper and more convenient, people are opting for quality, healthy foods. And they are prepared to pay for it.

**Q: You seem so passionate about what you do.**

A: I am. I'm also very proud of what Tony and I along with our staff have achieved. I love coming into the bakery and looking at the bread as it is being produced. There is real pleasure in looking at each perfect loaf. It's a beautiful thing and something I will never tire of.

Brasserie Bread supplies both the foodservice and retail sectors.

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