

BREAD

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BREAD

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CONTRIBUTORS



BLAIR CAMERON

When not shaping dough on Wednesday nights at Polestar Hearth, Blair makes promotional videos, writes about nutrition research and reads books to his son in ridiculous voices.



JESSE MERRILL

Jesse Merrill bakes a lot of bread. He has a freezer full of wild berries and a gallon and a half of elderberry wine in his cellar.



LUC MARTIN

Luc is the founder of Tilburg Sourdough, a bakery he opened in 2012. "I spend most of my time either making or eating food of some kind." he says.



RALUCA MICU

Raluca was born in Bucharest, Romania, but currently lives with her daughter Fiona and husband Alex in London, UK. She is a home baker dreaming to open a tiny bakery in London, to buy a dog and one day go on a round the world trip with the family.



JARKKO LAINE

Jarkko is a writer, home baker, and a curious guy insanely interested in everything. He divides his time between building a publishing empire and constructing cities from Lego bricks with his two sons.



WELCOME

IF ONE THING, Christmas is a time for traditions.

Whether you buy into the religious part of the celebration or not, you probably have clear opinions on how everything has to go from the right time to decorate the Christmas tree to how the presents are given to the kids to what is eaten at the feast table. For me, in my childhood, Christmas always began the night before December 24th when the whole family got together to bake gingerbread cookies while listening to Christmas music.

For you, the thing that makes Christmas just right is probably something different—but just as important.

I don't know all that much about the other celebrations of the holiday season at the end of the year, but I'm willing to make the guess that the same is true for them as well. After all, as researchers have found, we *homo sapiens* are a species with an innate desire for tradition and ritual, both of them forms of bonding that create a tight community—be it a family, a neighborhood, or a religious group.

IN A WORLD where everything keeps moving and changing faster than ever, it's easy to look down on tradition. But if, as it seems, it is what makes us human, instead of shedding the last of our rituals we need more of it!

In getting there, bread is a powerful tool. As a foodstuff deeply bound to tradition, it gives us the language and aesthetics to ground us into our past and bring us closer to each other.

In the words of a Moroccan proverb: "By bread and salt we are united."



THIS IS THE tenth issue of BREAD, and as such, also the final issue in 2013.

In these ten issues, we have come a long way from the first edition, "The Art of Bread," published in the beginning of 2012. Even though the magazine came from nowhere, you quickly embraced it and joined me on this journey that keeps getting more interesting all the time. Thank you for being a part of a very special group of people who have made this possible!

IN THIS ISSUE, I am happy to present four inspiring contributors—some of them familiar from previous issues already—who provide interesting articles about many aspects of bread making: Blair Cameron, Jesse Merrill, Raluca Micu, and Luc Martin have contributed articles that will lead us from designing a bread formula to planning and developing a bakery to solving our bread making troubles.

We will also look into Christmas bread traditions and—with insight from Swedish home baker and bread book author, Martin Johanson—writing books about bread.

I hope you will enjoy the issue!

AS ALWAYS, if you have feedback, questions or otherwise want to get in touch, just [send me e-mail](#). I do my best to reply promptly.

Thank you for an amazing year!

Merry Christmas, happy holidays, and happy baking!

— Jarkko



for·mu·la
/fôrmyələ/

1.

noun

a method, statement, or procedure for achieving something

2.

a rule or style unintelligently or slavishly followed.

DESIGNING A FORMULA

by BLAIR CAMERON

AS A HOME BAKER, it can be intimidating to depart from the pages of your favourite bread book. It was Tartine Bread by Chad Robertson that introduced me (and a host of home bakers) to what good bread could be. Although my collection of bread books has expanded, it's still the percentages in Tartine's basic loaf that I return to and improvise from.

I have come to understand that formulas from a book (or super-stylish e-zine) are just a starting point for a baker. Dough, particularly naturally leavened dough, is intimately responsive to its environment. It is through exploring, taking risks, and departing from formulas that one's skill as a baker can be honed.

WHAT YOU'LL find below is a formula of sorts; a story of an artisan baker making a super-local loaf of bread, woven into a guide for adventurous folks interested in going beyond the pages of their bread books.



STEP ONE: FORCE YOUR HAND – MAKE YOURSELF DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

THE MYSTERY BREAD emerged out of a creative need.

Polestar Hearth, an artisan bakery in Guelph, Canada, started out in 2007 as a Community Supported Bakery (CSB), where customers purchase a 16-week subscription of good, naturally leavened bread, pulled from a brick oven each week.

Jesse Merrill, the founder and owner of Polestar Hearth, is an artisan in every sense of the word, with an ability to conceptualize an ideal, and then, through practiced hand (and, I maintain, sorcery), bring such a chimerical thing into being.

It was the CSB that gave his bakery life, but the prescribed bread schedule fenced him in.

"You have to keep the joy in it," he told me as he and his four-year old son mixed cookie dough in their kitchen. Adding the Mystery Bread to the CSB rotation gave him a chance to re-infuse the joy (and challenge) of creating new breads.

He went on to say that "our community bread share attracts people who are interested in taking an adventure with us."

It's a forgiving crowd who shares in the really great loaves... and the not-so-great ones.

THE MYSTERY BREAD has been both.

Some loaves that started out as "Mysteries" have now taken up permanent residence in the rotation, such as the Raisin' Hazel (an extraordinary bread with heaps of whole toasted hazelnuts, plump raisins and a smattering of fennel seeds) or the seasonal Purple Carrot Bread (a country-white dough flecked with joyous purple shreds of local heritage carrots). The Buckwheat loaf, well... he's still embarrassed about that one.

IT WAS WITH this background that it got to Monday night, and Jesse realized he needed a formula for the Mystery Bread mix in a couple of days.

His hand was forced, and the creative juices started flowing.

STEP TWO: COMPARE AND CONTRAST – STUDY YOUR FLOUR

SOMEHOW, word about a brick-oven bakery making sourdough bread reached the Amish community of Howick, Ontario. A few days before the fated Mystery Bread, a couple of Amish farmers from up the

"Some loaves that started out as Mysteries have now taken up permanent residence in the rotation."



road (actually it was about 80 kilometers away) showed up at the one-car garage that has been converted into Polestar Hearth bakery.

They came with 20-pound bags of whole wheat flour, flour stone-ground from wheat berries coaxed out of the horse-tilled soil. The sort of quaint-as-hell flour an artisan baker dedicated to local food systems only dreams of.

In a highly processed world, where flour purchased at supermarkets has untraceable wheat catchments, the allure of such local wheat, purchased directly from the farmer/miller, was irresistible.

JESSE PULLED OUT a handful of the local flour and spread it over the bench next to the organic whole wheat and white flours he was currently using. Letting the flour fall through his fingers revealed that it had been fairly sifted for a whole wheat flour, meaning that he could just use a bit of added white flour to carry the "whole-some vibe."

Tasting it revealed a sweet, nutty, and fresh flavour, a sense of place that the French call "terroir".

It was worth a try.

IF THE SOURDOUGH CULTURE is the soul of the bread, the flour is everything else.

The physical characteristics, crumb, crust, colouring all take their cue from the

quality of the flour. Examining known and new flours, side-by-side, is essential. It gives the baker a sense of how one might combine ingredients to achieve a desired aesthetic in the resulting loaf.

STEP THREE: CHECK YOUR BALLS

IF JESSE WAS GOING TO use 20 pounds of horse-farmed, stone-ground, intensely local organic flour, it was time to get to know it more intimately.

He made a 60% hydration ball of the local flour (100g flour, 60g water), and again compared it against his known flours. The ball of local flour stood up, holding its shape well initially, corroborating the farmers' estimates of 15% protein content or more. As hours went by it flattened down a little more than the others, indicating a possibly low falling number and higher enzyme content.

Typically, all-purpose flour has a protein content of 9-12% while bread flour has about 12-14% protein. Higher protein typically means stronger dough.

SEEING HOW new hydrated flours hold up next to familiar flours gives an indication of how much can be used for a desired aesthetic. A strong, local flour like this might have potential in a Mystery

"Jesse pulled out a handful of the local flour and spread it over the bench next to the organic whole wheat and white flours he was currently using. Letting the flour fall through his fingers revealed that it had been fairly sifted for a whole wheat flour."

Bread, but with a propensity to slacken off, it couldn't do it alone.

STEP FOUR: FIND YOUR FLOUR'S SOUL MATE

JESUIT MISSIONARIES were amongst the first settlers to venture into the heart of what would become Canada. Heeding the call of Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order, missionaries were called to "travel to various places and to live in any part of the world where there is hope of God's greater service and the help of souls."

According to reports, Indian souls to be helped were outnumbered only by beaver pelts and trees in the New World.

IT WAS in 1852, two-hundred years after the first Jesuits stepped foot on this continent, that Jesuits arrived in Guelph on a permanent basis.

These Jesuits later founded what would become English Canada's training grounds, or "Novitiate", for other Jesuits. Care and respect for the land has long been a part of their tradition, and the farm continues to be a centre of excellence for organic crop management, though the training of new novitiates ceased thirty years ago.

"It was in 1852, two-hundred years after the first Jesuits stepped foot on this continent, that Jesuits arrived in Guelph on a permanent basis."



The 240 hectares of the Ignatius Jesuit Centre today is varied. Much of it is under cultivation. Other forested tracts, dense with hardwoods that give way to white cedar groves, reveal clearings, one with a stone labyrinth, another with an outdoor art installation. Contemplative rewards for the adventurous.

ON THESE HISTORIC and sacred grounds, not 3 kilometres from Polestar Hearth, grew organic, heritage varieties of spelt and rye last season. Two 50 kg bags of harvested spelt and rye berries were already carefully stored at Polestar Hearth, waiting for their time to shine.

Jesse had been experimenting with cooked grains in his home kitchen, and was looking for an opportunity to reduce his store-house of local grain.

"On my to-do list is to figure out how to make good, local bread in a reliable way," Jesse shared.

The southern-Ontario climate doesn't always cooperate, but it was worth testing this assortment of local ingredients.

WITH A FORGIVING crowd scheduled to receive their Mystery Bread in three days, it seems fitting to quote the revolutionary anthem by Rage Against the Machine:

"What better place than here. What better time than now."



STEP FIVE: RATIO-NALIZE – SCALE IN OTHER INGREDIENTS

WITH A CERTAIN aesthetic in mind, a pan-loaf baked in scotch blocks, Jesse worked out his percentages (see measures on page 16).

He was going for a fairly whole-grain bread. The increased availability of carbohydrates in whole-grain flour tends to get the wild yeast and bacterial culture fermenting really actively. Reducing the levain percentage, even slightly from 18% to 16%, can slow down the whole process, a necessity to accommodate the schedule of the other doughs which undergo overnight, cool proofing.

An 80% hydration (80g of water for every 100g of flour¹) would yield a moist crumb, and baking in the scotch blocks would provide support to the proofing dough.

THE SPELT AND RYE were boiled to soften the berries, yet add a bit of bite to the final product.

Based on another of Polestar's formulas, a millet-sunflower bread developed by Jesse's business partner and fellow virtuoso baker Scott Williams, it was decided to add 75 grams of each berry, per loaf, a generous helping of local pearls of grain distributed through the crumb.

STEP SIX: IF IT AIN'T BROKE, FIX IT

THE BREAD WAS shaped, proofed overnight, and baked in Polestar's brick oven. They were lightly rounded, tightly nestled and blooming out of the scotch-block, the burnished, blistered tops dotted with spelt and rye berries.

As with every Thursday afternoon, the small bakery became a bustling hub of activity and excitement as the CSB members came to collect their Mystery Bread.

I asked Jesse to describe the result. "A delightful, light chewy texture. Taste

1: The hydration is presented in "Bakers' Percentage", a measure that expresses the amount of ingredients in relation to the total flour used to make scaling and remembering formulas easier. For example, when working with a kilo of flour, 2% salt would be 20 grams and 80% water 800 grams. For a more detailed explanation, see [issue 1 of BREAD](#).



wasn't perfect. A bit 'farm-y'. The grains were cooked a bit long."

An artist is his own harshest critic.

"But it all got eaten," he said with a wry smile.

A FORMULA is far from formulaic.

Jesse explained it this way: "If you give someone a hard and fast formula, you're not teaching them to fish."

It is merely a starting point. It must respond to its place, its environment, its ingredients. This local bread formula alone may not work for you. Your flour, the grains and your hands will have a different story. But that's the way it should be.

He went on, "I think people should mess around with recipes. As in music, if you're not going to take a risk, and accept something less than perfect from time to time, you're never going to have a stellar night!"

IT IS ULTIMATELY the skill and intuition of the baker that determines the success of a given formula. To be a baker is to become attuned to your environment and to never stop tweaking your formulas.

For Jesse and Polestar Hearth, their Mystery Bread is an opportunity to flex their creative muscles, keep ideas fresh, and discover gems along the way.

"I think people should mess around with recipes. As in music, if you're not going to take a risk, and accept something less than perfect from time to time, you're never going to have a stellar night!"



FORMULA

(WAIT, DIDN'T BLAIR SAY NO FORMULA!?)

by JESSE MERRILL

THE AMISH are pretty quiet about their way of life. They don't proselytize, and it can be very difficult to get them to open up at all. I got a mysterious cell phone call—the voice having that unmistakable Old-Low-German lilt—making a date two weeks hence to see my oven and bring me some flour to try.

At the appointed day and hour, in strolled two men in woollen homespuns, with broad smiles and the wondering eyes of simple folk on a rare trip to town. I learned later that they had hitched a ride with a neighbour, then ridden a train and finally walked the last 3 kilometers here with bags of flour on their shoulders.

These guys wanted to sell some flour!

THEY ALSO BROUGHT a carefully handwritten recipe from home, two pages long.

I dropped the eggs and milk and the yeast, but the admonishment to add at least some plain white flour made good sense to me. I advise that when experi-

menting with unknown flours it is always a good idea to ease into it with a fair portion of flour you know and trust...

IN SPITE OF a more than 15% protein count (remarkable in a certified organic flour), I had my doubts about the falling number of this flour, and I was trying to float some very heavy grain berries, too.

So we went with:

50%	Hard white flour
50%	Howick whole wheat
80%	Water
1.8%	Sea salt
150 g	Boiled grains per loaf

THE GRAINS take up about 3 times their weight in water, but we don't count that water into the hydration percentage. With

a boiled soaker it's best to simply calculate your loaf size bearing in mind that you'll be adding these inert grains to that whole number.

So we wanted a 950g loaf, made from 800g of dough and 150g of berries.

WE USE as little as 8% of the flour in the levain in the summer and as much as 22% in our cold shop in the winter, with an equal amount of water. Because of that huge variation, we always count the levain into the total flour and hydration percents.

Our levain is fermented about 7 hours until just bubbly, fresh and sweet. I'll give two versions here at 10% and 20% (the 20% version in brackets below) and you can take it from there!



TWO FINE LOAVES

Levain:

100g
(200g) White flour

100g
(200g) Cool water

10g
(20g) Ripe culture

Dough:

350g
(250g) White flour

450g
(350g) Whole wheat flour

620g
(520g) Water

16g Sea salt

150g Cooked grains, toasted seeds
or nuts, dry currants, etc.

WE USE a five hour bulk ferment, and an overnight proof at approximately 14°C (57°F), but you could also leave the shaped loaves out for an hour or so and refrigerate overnight in a home fridge—or simply bake the loaves after about three hours at room temp.

Now go forth and catch some fish!





BREAD FOR CELEBRATION

by JARKKO LAINE

"WOULD YOU bake some bread for Christmas?" That's one of the questions any bread baking person—at least an amateur baker like myself—longs to hear. If you don't celebrate Christmas, it might be one of the other holidays in the season, but the sentiment is the same. Having some of the people you like the most ask for your bread makes you feel good.

But what to bake?

You could pick your trustiest recipe—the one that never fails and that everyone asks the recipe for—but after a while, that can get boring. Or maybe you want to experiment on the side, in addition to that famous bread of yours.

Either way, this article is here to get your imagination going and to inspire you to bake something for Christmas.

FOLLOWING Jesse Merrill's advice from the previous article, instead of giving you a readymade Christmas bread formula*, this time I am just pointing you to some of the common traits among celebration breads, as well as traditions that you can use for inspiration in your own formula development.

Take the bits and pieces that feel most interesting to you, combine with some of your own ideas, and create a bread that is both new and familiar.

It might be a good idea to try the recipe once or twice before bringing the results to the feast table, though...

"This time I am just pointing you to some of the common traits, as well as traditions that you can use for inspiration in your own formula development."

* I did publish a complete Christmas bread recipe last year. See issue 4 for full article.



TO BEGIN OUR exploration of festival breads, we need to think a bit about history. Throughout Europe (and the world), for most of our written history, bread has been a staple food, made in large batches and—most of the time—using common ingredients such as water and brown flour. Wheat, but also barley and rye. White flour was expensive as it meant wasting a big part of the grain, leading to less flour from the same amount of grain compared to whole wheat flour.

So, with this background in mind, coming up with a list of ingredients that were added to bread when it was time to celebrate is actually rather straightforward: we just need to look at the historical price tags. White flour was expensive. Butter and eggs were more expensive than just using water. Sugar

was scarce. So, even a regular milk based sweet bread baked using white flour was something of a cause for celebration in itself.

That's why it's no wonder that many cultures include such a bread—from the Jewish [Challah](#) and its world-famous braids to the Norwegian Christmas bread, [Julkake](#). Comparing the recipes, you will quickly notice that there is not that much difference between the doughs: the Norwegians add some cardamom and candied cherries and lemon peel, and that's it.

IN HIS BOOK, [Bread Matters](#), Andrew Whitley summarizes this finding very well when he writes: "When you compare the various festive baking traditions, there is really very little difference in the basic recipes, which is not surprising — after all, there were not that many different ingredients available. It is shape and decoration that distinguish one national or religious tradition from another."

He even goes as far as to offer a common dough that he says can be used as a basis for everything from panettone to stollen to christopsomo, and so on. A simple enriched dough with a preferment, milk, eggs and butter.

That is not to say that it's all there is to panettone, for example. As anyone who has tried making the Milanese Christmas specialty will tell you, it's quite far from a

simple enriched bread and very hard to get just right. Still, the basis is the same.

WHEN PLANNING for this article, I thought I would include ideas from not only Christmas but also other festivities that take place at the end of the year: Hanukkah, New Year's Eve, Kwanzaa, and so on. But as I was looking into all of them, I soon noticed that none of the others have bread at such a central place as does Christmas.

For example, Hanukkah is about fried food, and while donuts could be considered a type of bread, I am not going to take that leap this time. And Christmas bread variations from around the world already give us plenty to draw inspiration from; in [Dictionnaire universel du pain](#), a full page and a half is devoted to different Christmas bread traditions. So, after this short introduction to festival bread, let's take a look at a few examples from the Christmas season around the world.

CHRISTOPSOMO AND OTHER SWEET TREATS

OF ALL COUNTRIES that place bread at a central place at the Christmas table, Greece is among the most devoted. Apparently, for the Greek, bread is important at every meal—and every celebration—and Christmas is no exception.

"Of all countries that place bread at a central place at the Christmas table, Greece is among the most devoted."



The traditional Christmas bread, christopsomo (Χριστόψωμο, Christ's Bread) is so important—almost sacramental—that the person making the bread always starts by crossing herself. She then takes great pride at only using the best ingredients and taking no shortcuts in the process. Finally, she carefully decorates the round loaf of bread with a cross, or maybe with symbols that represent the family or its main profession.

It's clearly a special bread with an important role in the culture and tradition, but what could we take from it into our own Christmas baking?

THE CHRISTOPSOMO DOUGH IS a variation of the basic enriched dough, but it is interesting to note the geographical differences: [this Greek recipe](#) uses olive oil instead of butter and a combination of wine, brandy, some orange juice, and water as the liquid. All of them ingredients that have historically been plentiful in Greece, but not so much in Northern Europe.

That said, when you look for christopsomo recipes online, you will find many that are made with milk and butter bringing them very close to the sweet breads from other countries such as brioche—or panettone and julkake mentioned earlier. So, there is variation even within a tradi-

"One good and simple option for your own sweet bread could very well be nothing but a regular enriched white dough with a generous serving of Christmas spices and fruit, maybe soaked in some alcohol. A combination of many different traditions at once!"

tion itself and at the same time, breads from different regions can be very similar.

Dictionnaire universel du pain describes a very similar ritual bread from Provence. It's a round bread decorated with four nuts placed in a cross shape on top of the loaf and—just like often with the Greek christopsomo—a branch from the olive tree placed in the middle of the loaf for a good harvest the next year.

BUT THAT'S NOT where the similarities end: looking at the christopsomo recipes and comparing them to other sweet recipes of the season—panettone or stollen for example—you will notice how many of the spices are repeated from one recipe to the other: raisins, walnuts, almonds, cinnamon, cloves, cardamom... Grated or candied orange peel.

Just like Whitley says, "there were not that many ingredients available."

So, one good and simple option for your own sweet bread could very well be nothing but a regular enriched white dough with a generous serving of Christmas spices and fruit, maybe soaked in some alcohol. A combination of many different traditions at once!

Just make sure you give the yeast enough time to work its magic—or add the fruit only later in the fermentation process to make sure your bread gets fully fermented, soft and luxurious.

VÖRTBRÖD AND MAKING IT A BIT LESS SWEET

ENOUGH ABOUT sweet bread! After all, this is a magazine about bread and while these sweet treats technically classify as bread, they are still border cases.

So, what about breads that are meant to be eaten with the food—not before or after the meal? Maybe something like the Swedish Vörtbröd? Still sweet but definitely bread.

VÖRTBRÖD is a dark but soft rye and wheat bread traditionally made using wort, the liquid from the mashing process in beer brewing. These days, [most recipes](#) just replace wort with Christmas beer or ale, but if you can find wort, go for it!

And again, there is no escaping the Christmas spices: orange peel, cloves, raisins—they are all in the recipe. Along with molasses or dark syrup for sweetness.

So, when looking for a (slightly) less sweet bread, a good option could be to take some of the elements from vörtbröd, such as the beer and malted flour—maybe some of the spices—and combine with some of the common nuts and fruit of the season. A bread with a hint of allspice or cinnamon, maybe some fennel, with raisins or candied orange or lemon peel sounds good to me.

IF YOU don't like the malt and ale combination and would like something lighter and still a bit less sweet, a good idea is to take some elements from the sweet breads and add them to your basic bread dough, be it yeasted or sourdough based.

You could for example just mix raisins and cinnamon, or some cherries and fennel, as Dan Lepard does in two of his recipes from [Handmade Bread](#). Or why not go even simpler: take your regular sourdough recipe and following Chad Robertson's advice from [Tartine Bread](#), add some orange zest, fennel seed, and golden raisins. That would have a Christmas-like feel but still be much more bread than cake.

MORE EXPERIMENTS

AS THESE IDEAS show, the festival breads share a lot in common but are open to experimentation. Don't limit yourself to what has been done traditionally: Think about the other foods served at your Christmas table. What tastes are there and how could they be incorporated into bread? Or can you find a type of bread that enhances the flavor and brings it to life? A crisp flatbread to eat with cheese, maybe?

If you are ready for something totally different, follow the Mexican tradition and make a Christmas bread with enriched white dough and roll cheese, salami and some good ham into it!





FROM ARCHITECTURE TO BREAD

by RALUCA MICU

NOT SURE WHY, but for most of my childhood and teen years I have wanted to grow up and become a businesswoman. I would be dressed in a suit, have my own office with a massive window and a view of the city and I would work late. This was my: "When I grow up I want to be..." story.

As time went by, my story changed quite a bit. I work in a big office with massive windows and even though I don't wear a suit, it is I guess, pretty close to the picture I have painted above. A dream come true? Hardly!

These days the suit business is very much behind me as I've realised all I want

to do is work with my hands, make people happy with the products of my work, bake bread!

I HAVE A PROFOUND ADMIRATION for people who follow their dreams, who have the courage to say this job is not for me, this life is not for me, I want something else! Something that will make me happy and proud, something that will give me that push to wake up in the morning knowing that I will love every single moment of the day ahead.

For all of the reasons above I admire Codruța Popa, a Romanian trained architect, who has decided that bread baking is

what she wants to do and what makes her happy. And she is pursuing that dream!

Codruta's story started with a dare from her husband to bake bread. Shy at the beginning, she started developing a passion for sourdough with every bread she baked, every book she read.

In time, as her confidence grew she started sharing her knowledge with others on a blog. Things got better and better. She got invited to sell her bread at different events and also to do baking workshops. She was still an architect when she decided her dream was actually elsewhere: to open a bakery. She went on

different apprenticeships that helped her a lot and then, in August 2013, she opened a bakery in her hometown, Timisoara.

Unfortunately, today she is not part of that business venture, as things with her business partner took a rather unpleasant turn, but she still has big dreams and bread is at their center.



Raluca: How did your bread journey start?

Codruța: I WAS CHALLENGED to start this new journey by my husband (boyfriend at that time). The yeast and yeasted dough were new to me. I feared yeast, but at the same time I was attracted by it. I was curious to see what it was all about. So when he proposed to give baking a try, I had to take up the challenge.

I started with a simple pizza dough recipe, followed by a bread one. At that time (end of 2008, beginning of 2009) I had no idea of the existence of sourdough and I avoided the recipes that required it until one day, when I read somewhere that sourdough is the real bread. I began to read about it and from that moment on, everything changed.

There was a mix of fear, curiosity, respect and the desire to know more, to learn more. The more I read about it, the

more I was attracted to it, and soon, what began as a game turned into passion.

Raluca: What does bread mean to you?

Codruța: BREAD IS A WAY TO express and reveal myself. It means life; it means "to be". It's my way of showing people that I love them and that I care. Besides, it means meditation, peace and harmony. It's My Moment, My Space, when and where I can let my thoughts run free. I'm searching essential answers when kneading dough. Making bread defines me.

It's a journey through life, at a slow pace, asking questions, looking around and learning to be humble and respectful and forgiving...

I believe it's not the destination that matters, but the journey and kneading dough, making bread, teaches you just that. Read means passion, fun and it truly makes me happy.

Raluca: Take us through your bread baking experience: being an amateur baker, taking your bread to food events, bread baking classes etc.

Codruța: UP UNTIL a few years ago, Romania was faced with a massive lack of information regarding sourdough bread.

After learning a lot on the subject, the hard way, with lots of failures and many



hours of reading, I was ready to share my experience and help others discover the beauty and benefits of sourdough bread.

In May 2011, I started writing a blog about bread. It became popular very fast and lots of people have started to make bread at home, began a sourdough culture and for some of them it quickly turned into passion.

Through my blog and because of it, I established connections with a lot of amateur bakers, great bloggers, wonderful people!

I had my first bread baking workshop in April 2012, when I taught a class of thirty people the magic of sourdough bread! It was challenging, but fantastic at the same time. It was followed by other workshops and I was very happy to see people were really interested in the subject. The more they knew, the more eager they became.

I TOOK PART in a few bread and food events, in Timisoara (my home town) or in Bucharest (where, if you can believe it, I delivered the bread by plane!) and they all meant a lot.

At that time I didn't have much experience with large quantities of dough. I had to learn how to work with five or six different types of dough at the same time, to organise my time and the space in my small kitchen, so I can bake perfect loaves every time. I've learned a lot about

"The moment I decided I wanted to be a baker and to open a bakery, I knew I had to start somewhere. I was an amateur home baker with no experience in a professional environment and I needed help."

fermentation, the importance of temperature and tricks to efficient schedules, even if I didn't have a lot of storage space in my fridge, not enough bannetons and only one small oven. I've worked hard, I didn't fail and my confidence grew stronger with each event.

Raluca: How did you end up doing internships in the UK and US and how was it?

Codruța: THE MOMENT I decided I wanted to be a baker and to open a bakery, I knew I had to start somewhere. I was an amateur home baker with no experience in a professional environment and I needed help.

I first tried to find an internship in France, but because I had no diploma or qualification in a Baking Institute, finding something in France proved to be very difficult. So I wrote letters to some of the bakers I met online, through forums or blogs, one in the US and another one in the UK, and they were happy to help.

I worked one week in the UK and two and a half weeks in the US and the experience was a crucial confidence boost for me. I didn't learn a lot about managing a bakery, because the nature of their businesses was completely different from what I had in mind for my bakery, but the overall experience was great!

I learned new techniques, I worked with different flours than the ones I was using in Romania and I started making pastry. It was hard work, but fun at the same time and I loved talking and working with people as passionate about bread as I am.

Raluca: What do you think is the most valuable thing you've learned during these apprenticeships?

Codruța: BEING A SELF-TAUGHT baker learning from books and through the Internet meant that I was always questioning my knowledge, my abilities, my techniques.

Working side by side with these talented bakers, helped me understand things that were not very clear, helped me improve my skills, but most importantly helped me become more confident and aware of my talent.

I've also learned that being a baker takes a lot of sacrifice, patience and it is truly a vocation job. When I returned from those trips, I knew, without any shadow of a doubt, that I was meant to be a baker and that I will be good at it.



Raluca: Would you recommend an internship to every amateur baker that wants to open a small bakery, or do you think it can be done without one?

Codruța: I THINK WORKING in a real bakery helps a lot. Seeing how things are organised, working with professional tools and equipment, experimenting with different types of dough and getting used to working fast, are very important things for any future baker.

All of this is valuable and it can't be learned at home. I won't say it can't be done without, but it sure helps and it makes a difference when you have to decide for yourself. Getting to make mistakes and learn from them, on other people's dough, it's great!

Also seeing with your own eyes how a bakery is setup and how the equipment works can help you make better decisions for your own bakery.

Raluca: What is your favourite flour to work with and your favourite bread to bake?

Codruța: MY ALL-TIME FAVOURITE bread has to be rye bread. Rye flour is complex, rich in flavour and even though working with it is challenging, the aroma of a good rye bread is what makes my heart thrill.

Yet, my favorite flour to work with is durum flour. It is yellow and beautiful and makes for silky, smooth dough. The way it holds its shape makes working with it so easy. It's rewarding to the touch, eyes and taste buds. Oh, the yellowish crumb, the sweet flavor, the oven spring! It's a very pleasant bread to bake.

To top that off, for the past few months I've also developed a love for spelt flour and spelt bread. The more I work with whole wheat spelt flour (or white spelt flour), the more I respect it and appreciate it. It's similar to wheat, but yet so different. When well done, it's beautiful and amazingly delicious.

Raluca: You are a trained architect. Was it difficult to decide your vocation was actually in the baking world? Or are you successfully doing both at the moment?

Codruța: I WAS a good architect, but somehow, the decision came naturally, because at one point I've realised I was actually spending all of my time reading about dough and making bread, instead of practicing architecture. I don't have any regrets and it was an easy choice to make.

I love architecture, designing and finding the best solutions, but I don't like practicing it. It may be that the time wasn't right for me and architecture, I got lost in bureaucracy and the hard work was not

always rewarding, which more often than not lead to disappointment. Bread makes me happy and I consider myself fortunate that I can work and live doing something that I love.

Raluca: How did you decide to open a bakery?

Codruța: After writing on the blog for some time, I felt like I could do more than that: I wanted to be a proper baker, not just an amateur baker!

When I began writing the blog, the information on sourdough bread baking, in Romanian, lacked completely. I was in the same situation now: there was no artisan bakery in town, none that baked any sourdough products.

I was dreaming big! I didn't want to open just a bakery. I wanted to open a sourdough bakery!

Raluca: What do you think is the biggest challenge when moving from being an amateur baker to actually doing it for real, as a business?

Codruța: DEALING WITH large amounts of dough, working fast at a sustained pace and getting the same consistency in everyday baking. These were my biggest challenges.

"I was a good architect, but somehow, the decision came naturally, because at one point I've realised I was actually spending all of my time reading about dough and making bread, instead of practicing architecture. I don't have any regrets and it was an easy choice to make."



When working at home, you never get to make tens of loaves at once. When moving on from home baker to a professional baker, you soon learn that fermentation is different when you have large amounts of dough and you have to adapt or develop new techniques to allow you to work faster and deliver the same great quality with every loaf.

Good scheduling is the secret in achieving great results with every bake. However good scheduling is something they don't teach, it's something you have to learn and figure it out on your own.

Raluca: Tell me a bit about the bakery's name and logo. Was it all your idea? How were they chosen/design?

Codruța: MY NAME is Codruța Popa. My blog's domain is codrudepaine.ro. and even if the name is "Apa.Faina.Sare" (Water.Flour.Salt), everybody knows me as "Codru de Paine". In English "Codru de Paine" roughly translates to "A chunk of bread", but in Romanian, paired with my name it sounds like a nice wordplay. So when the time came to choose a name for our bakery, "Codru de Paine" was the natural choice that came to mind.

The idea for the logo was my husband's and he is also the designer behind it. Of course, we worked as a team the whole time, but he did all the work and he has



all the merit for the logo. My contribution was more on the critical side.

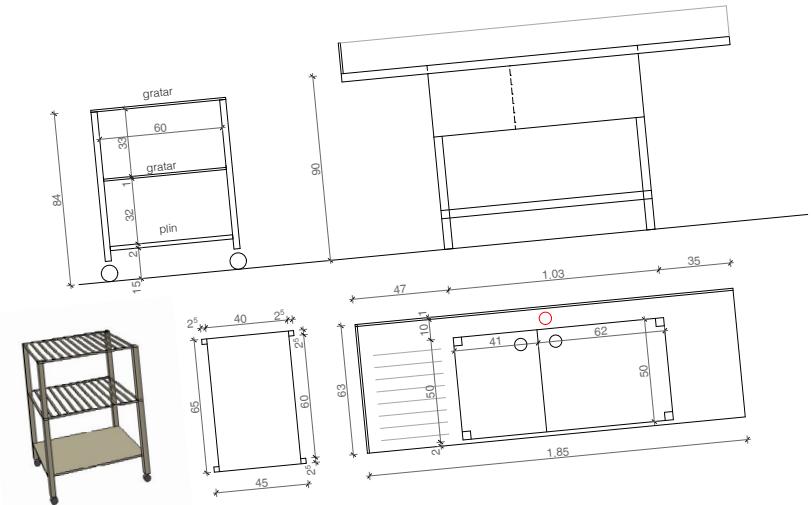
We went through a lot of changes until we were both happy with the end result. We settled for a logo that represents me, it's catchy, stylish and has a story to tell. It's a play using the letters "C" and "P" that form together a bread profile: my name, the name of the bakery, a loaf of bread, all in just one simple, perfect sign.

Raluca: Did you get involved in designing the bakery?

Codruța: YES. Firstly because of my formation as an architect and secondly because I knew better than anyone else the production flow necessary for the bakery.

Also, an important factor, we had no money in our budget to pay for a designer or architect and luckily for us, we didn't have to because I was able to design and draw everything.

I had some help from an architect friend when we got to the furnishing drawings, but the optimal workflow and the space organisation was all my idea.



"As a baker, I wanted everything to be functional, easy to use, with no extra steps in the bread making process. As an architect, I needed everything to be designed perfectly and to create a picture ready space."

Raluca: Can you talk us through the stages of the design and how you've seen it from both a baker and an architect's point of view?

Codruța: AS A BAKER, I wanted everything to be functional, easy to use, with no extra steps in the bread making process. As an architect, I needed everything to be designed perfectly and to create a picture ready space.

Sometimes the baker's needs were in opposition with the architect's views, but the baker's needs always prevailed. However most of the times the baker and the architect worked well together.

THE FIRST STEP in this build was to go and have a talk with the authorities.

Only after I was well informed about their demands and regulations, I started to draw the first sketches. Some of the regulations seemed weird, without sense or too expensive at the time, but I wanted to do everything by the book and I did.

Of course, the space was limited and I had to make compromises, but I measured and drew and measured and drew until everything started to come together. I had to work through a massive amount of drafts and drawings before the ideal version was finalised.

All this time I had to take into account the dimensions of all the equipment I was

about to buy and the necessities for each one: water, power supply, ventilation. I worked with electricians, plumbers, constructors, chimney sweepers. Every one of them received particular drawings from me and I had to supervise all of their work.

While trying to make the most of the tiny space and make it functional, I started to think and design the clients' area and the wooden furniture for it.

This is where a friend of mine offered her help, because I was exhausted from all the stress and pressure accumulated and was starting to make compromises, just to see it done already. With a clear mind, she took my drawings, improved them and helped deliver great furnishings for our space.

Raluca: What would you say is the most difficult part in designing a bakery?

Codruța: THE MOST DIFFICULT part is trying to fit a low budget.

If money is not an issue, then another difficult part is making the most of an existing space. If you're not designing and building a bakery from scratch, then it's hard to think you'll find premises that are perfect. So, making compromises is part of the job.

For example, I wanted a working table of 1 m in width by 2.8 m in length, but I

had to settle down for 0.8 m x 2.2 m, due to lack of space.

Knowing your needs is very important. There is no point in having a big mixer, if you'll only mix small batches of dough: two medium mixers are better in this case. From my point of view a well-designed bakery is a functional bakery.

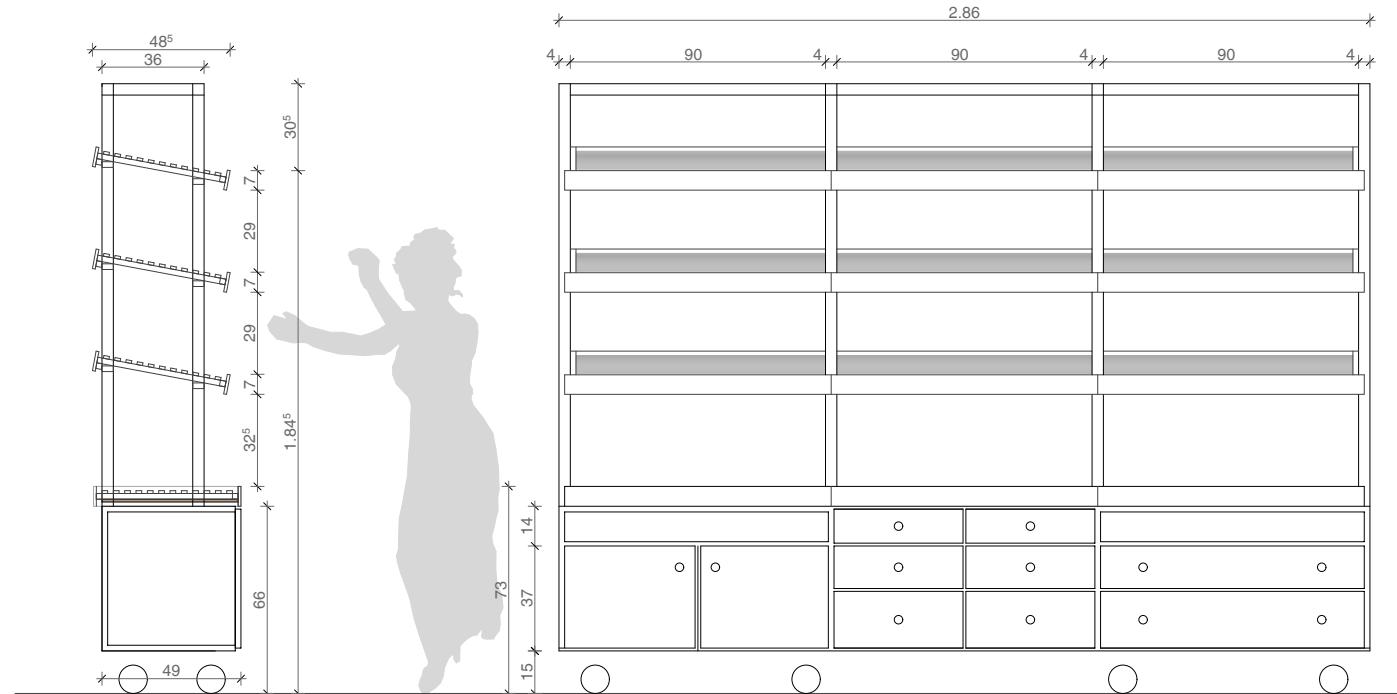
Raluca: What do you think is an elementary thing needed for a bakery to run and what is the most overestimated thing in a bakery when it comes to design/functionality?

Codruța: IT IS NOT just one elementary thing, but a few: a passionate baker with magical hands, a good oven and good quality flour. Basically, that's it. But practically, you need more than that: you need a good work ethic and reliable equipment.

Small things matters a lot. A large sink, a solid working table and having your tools and ingredients within easy reach, to avoid unnecessary gestures, are all very important things in a bakery. Some might seem like details or unimportant things, but overall, they are crucial to make a baker's life easier.

However the most important thing, in my opinion, is the passion and the science of the baker. Without it, a bakery is just a well-equipped space and what transforms

"However the most important thing, in my opinion, is the passion and the science of the baker. Without it, a bakery is just a well-equipped space and what transforms that space into a real bakery is the baker working there."





that space into a real bakery is the baker working there.

FOR ME, the most overestimated item, when it comes to functionality, is a proofer.

I didn't have one and I learned to work without it. It's expensive and if you're retarding the loaves in a cool room, a proofer is not justified. I don't deny it is good to have one, but it very much depends on the breads that you're planning to bake.

Plus, it can be improvised, by wrapping a rack in plastic, with a tray of hot water underneath. When selling equipment, sales agents will always try to make you buy a proofer along with the oven and they can convince you that you need one. In fact, you don't. Not if the budget is low and you'll mostly make sourdough breads. If you are planning on baking pastry and yeasted dough breads, then it's another story.

Raluca: *I understand you are no longer part of the bakery, due to some issues with your business partner. What have you learned from this experience, that you would like to share with others?*

Codruța: IN MY CASE, I've learned that when it comes to money, people forget the value of craftsmanship and they consider that money and goods are more important than people and passion.

It was a mistake from my part to be part of a business relationship with someone who did not share my beliefs and my passion. It hurt me to leave everything behind, but I took with me the baking experience I've gained, I took my know-how and my love for bread.

These are things that no one can take away for me. I'd advise everyone not to give up on what they believe, accept no compromises from others and if possible, associate only if there is no other alternative and only with a person that shares the same principles.

Raluca: *What do you think is the best thing about being a baker and what is the worst?*

Codruța: THE BEST THING is getting your hands in all that dough! Seriously now, for me the best thing was to be able to share my bread with lots of people and to know they appreciate it and that it makes them happy. It matters a lot to me and it makes all the difference.

Also, working with big batches of dough, with lots of flours and experimenting a lot is great! If you don't mind a certain routine, it's quite fun and rewarding.

THE WORST THING? Getting oven burns, repeatedly; over-proofing your dough overnight and not being able to do any-



thing to fix it; waking up really early in the morning, when the city is still asleep and leaving for work without coffee or breakfast.

Raluca: What would be your advice to any amateur baker that wants to go a step further and open a bakery?

Codruța: PLAN WELL. Think twice before doing anything. Talk to yourself, seriously. Being a professional baker is not a game, it is not just fun, and it is certainly different than being a home baker. It takes hard work, dedication, energy, resources, time and responsibility.

From outside, it might look attractive, and for me it is, but it's a vocation that requires sacrifices and that will change your life completely. If you think you are made for it, then do it! You'll find beauty and satisfaction and reward in every loaf you'll bake.

Raluca: What are your plans for the future?

Codruța: I HAVE TWO major plans: one is to write a book on sourdough bread, in Romanian. I've wanted to do this for a long time and now it's the right time for it. In the past, I didn't have the knowledge or the time. Now, I have them both and I think it would be good for people to have

all the information in one book written in Romanian.

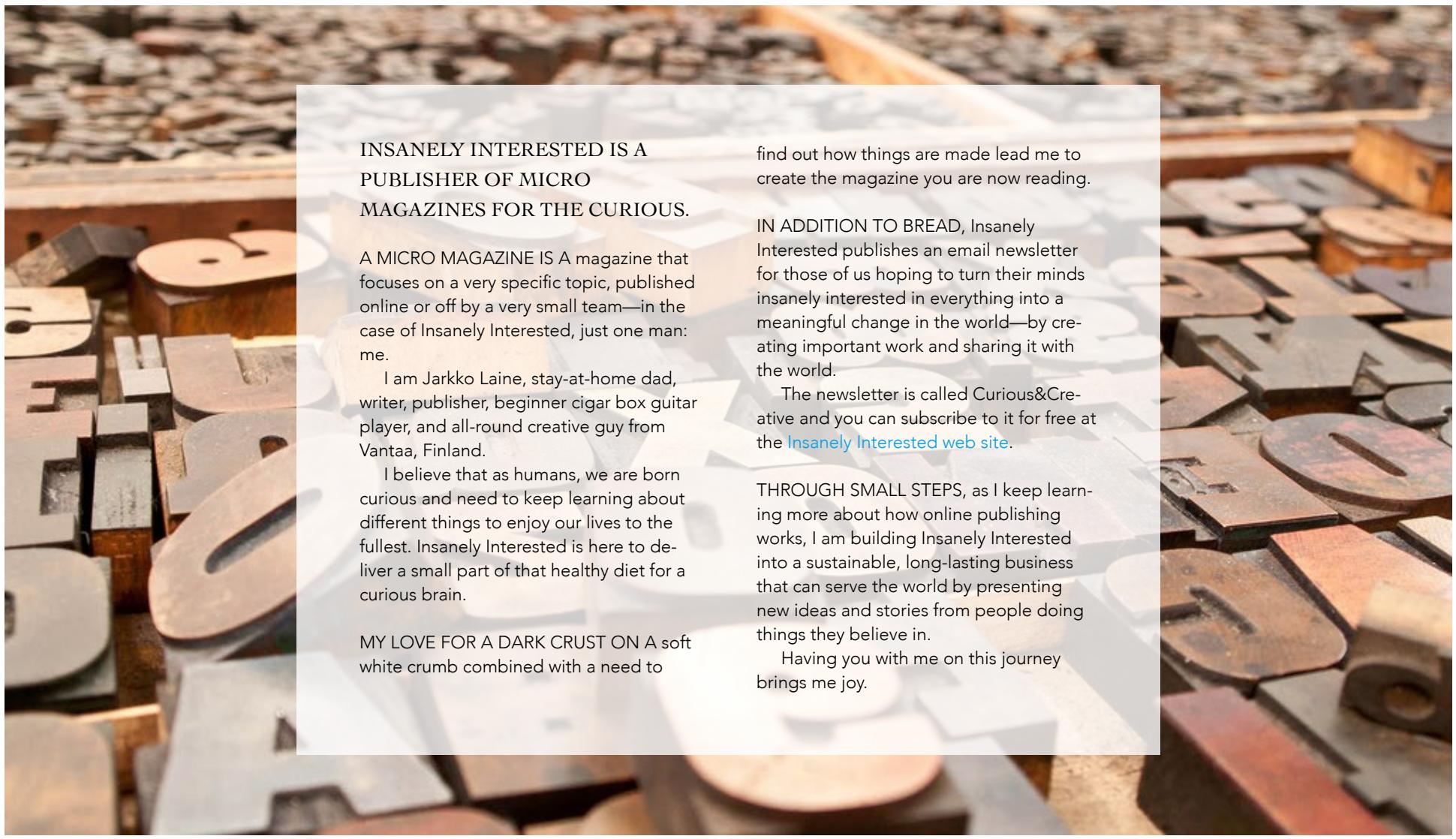
The other thing I want to do, is open a bakery, maybe smaller, maybe different from the one I had, but I want to have my own "Codru de Paine". I've learned a lot about designing and planning a bakery and I want to use all of that for my new business. There are things that I'd do the same, things that I'd do different, but my love for bread is still there and I want to share it with others.



I AM REALLY GLAD I was able to chat with Codruța, as her story has inspired me a lot and I hope it will inspire other aspiring bakers out there. It feels good to meet people so passionate and in love with what they do, who are happy to share their knowledge and experience with everyone who wants to listen and learn.

It's great to realise you're not the only bread dreamer left in this world.

Happy bread dreaming and baking everyone!



INSANELY INTERESTED IS A PUBLISHER OF MICRO MAGAZINES FOR THE CURIOUS.

A MICRO MAGAZINE IS A magazine that focuses on a very specific topic, published online or off by a very small team—in the case of Insanely Interested, just one man: me.

I am Jarkko Laine, stay-at-home dad, writer, publisher, beginner cigar box guitar player, and all-round creative guy from Vantaa, Finland.

I believe that as humans, we are born curious and need to keep learning about different things to enjoy our lives to the fullest. Insanely Interested is here to deliver a small part of that healthy diet for a curious brain.

MY LOVE FOR A DARK CRUST ON A soft white crumb combined with a need to

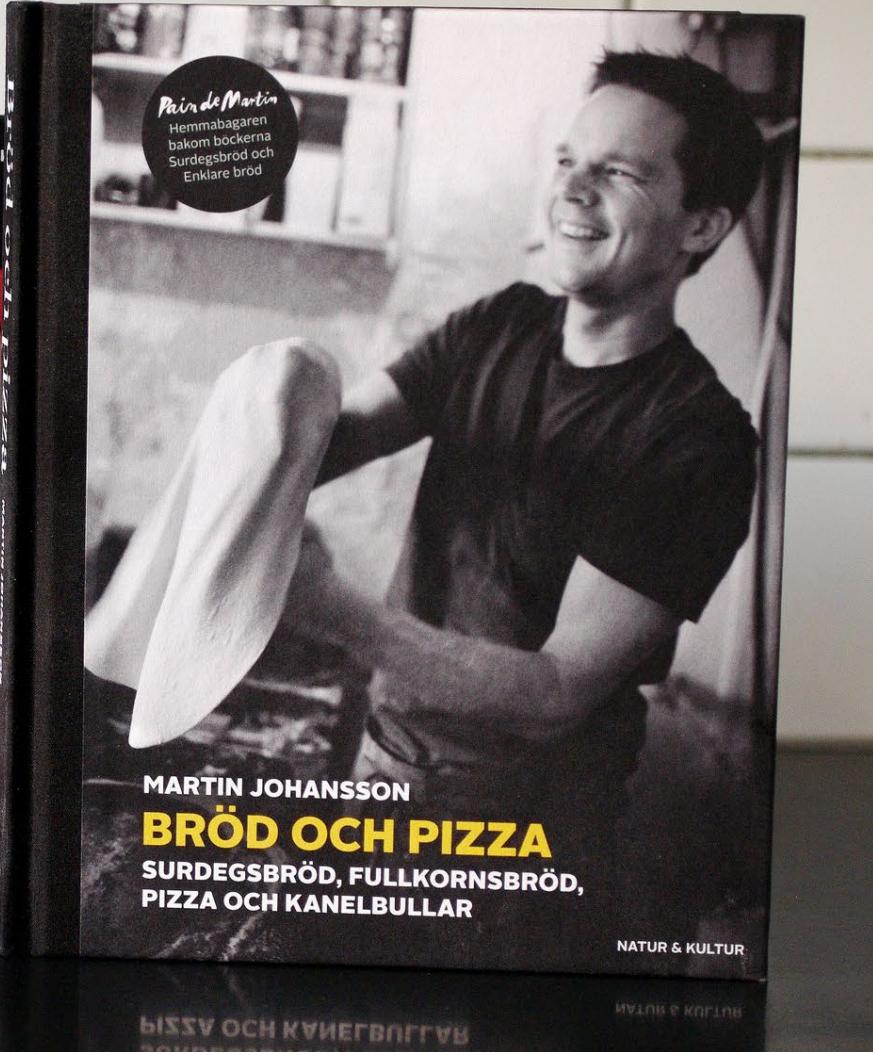
find out how things are made lead me to create the magazine you are now reading.

IN ADDITION TO BREAD, Insanely Interested publishes an email newsletter for those of us hoping to turn their minds insanely interested in everything into a meaningful change in the world—by creating important work and sharing it with the world.

The newsletter is called Curious&Creative and you can subscribe to it for free at the [Insanely Interested web site](#).

THROUGH SMALL STEPS, as I keep learning more about how online publishing works, I am building Insanely Interested into a sustainable, long-lasting business that can serve the world by presenting new ideas and stories from people doing things they believe in.

Having you with me on this journey brings me joy.



WRITING BOOKS ABOUT BREAD

by JARKKO LAINE

FOLLOWING RIGHT AFTER MY FAMILY, there are two big loves competing for the top position among the things I am passionate about: one is bread and the other is books. It's hard to put one above the other (although books have been with me a lot longer, so I guess they have a little bit of an advantage).

One way I have been able to combine these two interests is this magazine. Another is my collection of bread making books. Since 2009, the collection has grown from one book to a total of 21(?) today. The books inspire me to try new things, but they also keep me dreaming of writing one myself.

My guess is that the many blogging bakers out there have played with that same thought. Maybe you have as well?

MARTIN JOHANSSON has not only thought about it. He has done it.

He has written [three books](#) on bread making (*Surdegsbröd* in 2009, *Enklare bröd* in 2010, and *Bröd och Pizza* in 2012), all of which have become popular in his home country, Sweden, as well as beyond its borders. His first book has been translated to a number of languages, including Finnish, but not yet English.

That's a great accomplishment and all, but what most tingles my imagination is the fact that he is not a professional baker. He is just some guy who got interested in bread, started a blog, [Pain de Martin](#), and then used that platform to write a book—and then another.

While the journey from blogging to writing a book might not turn out quite as



straightforward for most writers as it did to Martin (a publishing house contacting you to write a book is like a story from a fairy tale), his story does show that it's possible to write a book about bread. Even if you aren't a famous baker to begin with.

I ASKED MARTIN a few questions about bread and using a blog as a gateway to writing a book about bread.

* *

Jarkko: You started your first bread blog in 2007. What motivated you to start blogging about bread? What kind of plans did you have with bread at the time?

Martin: AT THAT TIME, I had no plans at all for the blog. The purpose was simply to keep track of my experiments. Neither had I plans for the baking, it just seemed like a interesting world to explore.

Jarkko: Only two years later, in 2009, your first bread book, *Surdegsbröd*, was published. How did the book come to happen?

Martin: THE PUBLISHING company contacted me and asked if I was interested. At first I thought it was to early—I was just starting to get a grasp of sourdough

baking—but at the same time it seemed like a fun and stimulating thing to do, so I said yes!

Jarkko: The first book has since then been followed by two more books. Can you tell a bit about the reasoning behind each of them? How naturally did the second book follow the first, and so on?

Martin: THE SECOND BOOK is called "Simpler bread", and it was for all those people who liked the idea of baking, but thought it sounded too complicated. The book is all about baking without mixer and with really simple methods.

I was very much inspired by Jim Laheys No Knead Bread, but I tried to make the baking even more simple by shortening the rising periods. I also use the rest and fold technique in some recipes.

The original idea for the third book was to make a pizza book, but I came out like—a hotchpotch. I think it's a great book with lots of good stuff in it, but it also a bit unfocused.

Jarkko: How big a part of your life bread is today? Personally as well as professionally?

Martin: I THINK OF BREAD and dough all the time, and I think everyday life is so





much richer if you have a dough rising in the food cellar.

Since a year and a half ago, I study to become a middle school teacher, and the baking is really just a hobby—like it should be.

I bake bread four or five times a week, and I do post some things on my blog. Just not as regularly as I used to.

Jarkko: What is the most important thing you have learned about bread making in these years of baking and writing about bread?

Martin: I HAVE REALIZED that there are no truths about baking, just different ways to do it. I try not to be limited to one way of doing it, but to explore as many ways as possible.

And when it comes to sourdough baking, the condition of the sourdough is everything. If your sourdough is lively and alert, the rest is like a walk in the park. Also that the quality of the flour affects the baking more than I realized in the beginning.

Jarkko: Where would you say you are as a baker today?

Martin: SOMETIMES, it feels like the more I learn about baking, the less I know for sure. If you describe baking as an art form

and compare it to making a great painting, I'm at the level of mastering a stick man. I have so much to learn.

But I do make better bread now than three years ago, and with less effort too.

Jarkko: Can you describe the process of making a bread book a bit? What have been the parts that have surprised you the most?

Martin: I WOULD SAY it's a very long period of baking followed by some serious doubts, then some more baking, and then finally a few weeks of putting it all together.

One thing that turned out to be difficult than I could imagine was the logistics about taking photos of all breads.

Jarkko: How about marketing a book? I suppose the blog is the key? You have also made YouTube videos that act as trailers for the book, how important are they?

Martin: I THINK the blog is 97 percent. I have always wanted to make filmed instructions for all breads, but it's hard to make them on your own.

"I have realized that there are no truths about baking, just different ways to do it. I try not to be limited to one way of doing it, but to explore as many ways as possible."

Jarkko: How do you plan the idea for a new book?

Martin: I WOULD SAY its rather intuitive, I just go for whatever I feel for. Sometimes it works, sometimes not.

Jarkko: You do a lot of research when writing your books, at bakeries, or at a pizzeria in the case of your latest books. How does this work?

Martin: I HAVE HAD the opportunity to spend time with a few really good bakers, and I think it gives you very much.

When I worked on the pizza part for the latest book, I was doing the lunch pizzas at a cozy little sourdough pizzeria in Stockholm. After a few hundred pizzas, I understood what it was about.

But as always, what you do in a bakery or in a pizzeria is not always what you can make at home.

Jarkko: How does the future look like? More books? More bread?

Martin: SINCE I SEE MYSELF as a discoverer, not a fully accomplished baker, you could say a blog suits my purpose best. But at the same time, making books is so much fun and hopefully one day I'll get the opportunity to make another one.



I also have plans to launch a podcast about bread. Short episodes with where I interview people in certain bread matters. Hopefully the first episode will be out very soon.

The mission would be to attract even more people into the world of baking, and I want to make baking achievable for all.

Jarkko: Is there anything else you would like to add to any reader who is now blogging about bread and dreaming of writing a book about this passion?

Martin: JUST DO your own thing and hope for the best!

A blog really is good practice when it comes to recipe writing: you get instant feedback about what's working and not. I think it's important to find your own voice, even though it might sound a bit pretentious.



BREAD CLINIC

by LUC MARTIN and JARKKO LAINE

AS YOU PRACTICE bread making and go from one experiment to the other, there are times when you know exactly what to do differently in the next bake. But other times, you look at your loaf and feel puzzled. Changing the variable you thought would solve the problem didn't make the bread any better and now you are out of ideas. You feel stuck.

At times like that, it helps to have someone to ask for advice. Like a more experienced baker who has already gone through the same questions and struggles.

Someone like Luc Martin.

A SELF-TAUGHT sourdough baker who runs [Tilburg Sourdough](#)—a fine sourdough bakery in Tilburg, Netherlands—Luc says he has learned most of what he knows from Twitter. By asking questions, experimenting, reading, and experimenting some more.

For this issue of BREAD, Luc agreed to share his knowledge and answer your questions about bread making. You sent in questions, and I picked a few of them for Luc to help you solve.

On the next pages, you'll find three questions from bakers of different levels of expertise followed by Luc's answers.

By the bakers' request, I decided to keep everyone anonymous.

Thank you to everyone who sent in their questions!

I HOPE the answers will give insight and ideas not only to those asking the questions but also others who might have similar issues in their bread making.

And, as always, remember that practice is what makes the loaves perfect.



QUESTION:

PLEASE ADVICE on this side splitting and also how to encourage my loaf to open up at the top into a nice crispy crust. I'm baking in a hot fan oven at 240°C (464°F) with a pan at the base into which I pour boiling water for steam.

The recipe is Hamelman's sourdough whole wheat.

ANSWER:

I TALKED to this reader about her bread and she told me she's using a professional fan oven where the fan can't be turned off. This is always tricky because the circulating air in the oven causes the crust to dry during the first 15 minutes of the bake and stops that all important oven spring.

To make it worse, these large fan ovens have vents, sometimes hidden away, which let steam out—a nightmare if you've painstakingly added a tray of boiling water in the oven.

WHEN PEOPLE want more dramatic oven spring I normally recommend pre-shaping the loaves, baking them slightly underproofed, and if possible chilling the loaf before baking for the "champagne effect"*. But in this case, since she can only bake with fan, I'd suggest slightly over-proofing the loaf and very shallow scoring. This way, you can enjoy a brilliant crumb but accept that there's not a lot of oven spring.

* As a loaf cools in the fridge, it keeps fermenting, but as it gets colder, the dough can't expand anymore and the CO₂ released builds up pressure in the bubbles. When this loaf goes in the oven, it quickly heats up, the gasses expand and the loaf can almost explode like a champagne bottle.



QUESTION:

I MAKE 100% rye bread with raisins based on Andrew Whitley's Borodinsky recipe. The problem is that I think it turns out more like a fruit cake than I'd like. No one is complaining, and the crumb is pretty much what I get when I do a standard 100% rye bread with your basic rye levain. But I've had Borodinsky, and made Borodinsky that has less of a cake like texture than this.

The loaf pictured is 770 g baked in a 1 kilo farmhouse tin. I let it rise about 90 minutes after I mixed the whole batch, then baked 30 minutes at 230°C (446°F) and an additional 12 minutes at 210°C (410°F) or so. I cut the loaf after it cooled on the first day.

ANSWER:

I'VE BEEN trying to find Andrew Whitley's Borodinsky recipe online and there seems to be a lot of variation: different hydrations, starter types, spices (most use coriander, the above is the first time I've seen cardamom), and even different methods: the recipe used by this reader has a 90 min proof but I found one with a 3-4 hour proof!

IF I WERE to make this recipe, I would first drop the hydration slightly; my rye flour will never cope at 82%.

I would also make a batch where there was no alcohol soaked into the fruit. Alcohol in sourdough acts as a retardant and therefore could cause the loaf not to rise well and become cakey.

The last thing I'd do would be to add a bulk ferment of 2 hours before shaping. This will add more flavor, but more importantly, it will build activity in the dough which will allow it to rise in the oven.

IF YOU BAKE three more loaves, each with one of the above changes, you'll probably see where the problem is. Good luck!



QUESTION:

THE BREAD in question is the Olive Rosemary Levain from Daniel Leader's *Bread Alone*. I have made this bread many, many times before but not with this result.

Because my starter is not the strongest I added one tablespoon of active dry yeast (Fleischman's Red Star) to the mix. I made the dough on Wednesday evening because I wanted to use it to make rolls for a Thanksgiving dinner I was going to. I made the dough in the usual manner (I do add more olives than Dan calls for—4 ounces of Kalamata and 4 ounces of oil-cured Moroccan). The dough rose overnight at cool room temperature and had fully doubled by the next morning.

I shaped 24 2-ounce rolls and made the remainder of the dough into two boules that I placed in floured baskets.

I LET the rolls proof for 7 hours but they rose only a very small amount. I baked them off anyway. They had almost no oven spring. I took them to the dinner along with the other two kinds of rolls that I had made. The flavor was fine—I was even asked to make them again next year. But, as you can, see there was barely any ovenspring. Do you think that it was just that the dough was underkneaded initially?

ANSWER:

AGAIN, I'm not familiar with the recipe, but the overnight ambient bulk ferment with leaven and yeast is really long. During this bulk ferment gluten in the dough gets broken down so the finished loaf has no strength and collapses into the kind of flattish, wide loaf in the pictures.

It's also worth noting that you add commercial yeast for extra activity, but after an overnight bulk ferment that yeast has run out of steam and all the remaining lift comes from the leaven feeding on what's left of the dough—a sad state of affairs.

YOU SAY your starter is not the strongest so let's look at that: Try aggressively feeding it every 8 hours for 3 or 4 days with whole grain (100% extraction) flour, rye seems to be the most energetic. It will start to smell sharply fruity like berries and double in volume in a few hours.

Next, make a preferment: Mix a portion of your flour at 100% hydration with 30 degree water, and some of your active starter (around 10%). After 5 to 6 hours this should double in volume and you can combine it with the rest of the ingredients to make the dough. Give it a 2.5 hour bulk ferment before shaping and proofing for 1.5 hours. So long as the dough was warm (between 24-28 degrees), you should be ready to bake.





*"Your subscription
will not be
renewed
automatically to
continue next
year."*

WHAT'S NEXT FOR BREAD?

THIS IS WHERE you would normally expect to see an announcement about the next issue. You know: a brief outline of its contents, and the date when it will pop into your email inbox. Just like those we've had in every past issue so far.

This month, things are different.

The year is coming to an end and your subscription will not be renewed automatically to continue next year.

I could have set up the subscription to renew automatically—after all, that's how most magazines make their money—but that's not how I like to do things. I want to have you on board because you enjoy the journey and want to see where the magazine is going next!

THESE PAST TEN issues and two years of making and shipping BREAD to you have been an amazing experience, and I want to thank you for supporting my work all along the way!

But how I see this is that we are just getting started. Now is the time to put everything I have learned in these two years to use and boldly march towards new challenges. While it would be easy to continue just the same way, putting out six new issues with more content in the same format, there are still many new frontiers to explore and many ways to improve on the magazine.

And I would like to invite you to join me in making this happen.

BREAD ON PAPER

OH WELL, you probably already know what I'm getting at so I can just as well spit it out already!

Here we go...

As the next step, I want to try and take BREAD to print, thus turning it from a completely digital magazine to something you can hold and keep.

WHILE PRINT HAS BEEN declared a dead or at least dying medium many times during the past few years, I still believe there is something special about paper.

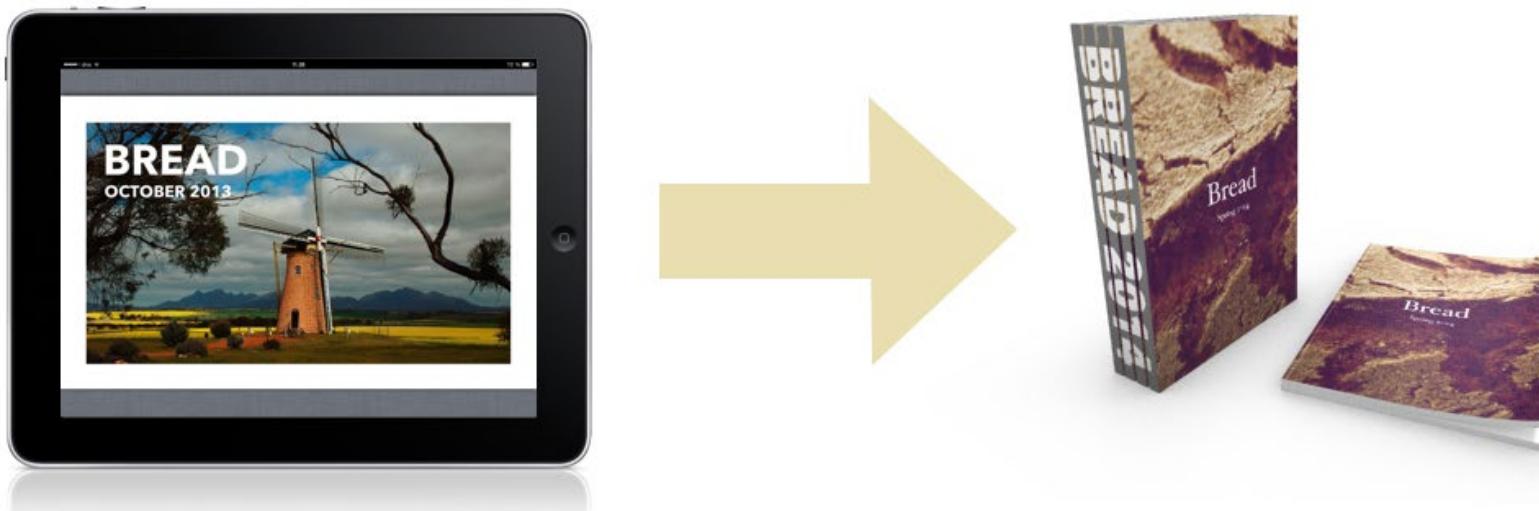
It's not that a printed magazine is necessarily better. In fact, publishing BREAD digitally has many benefits, most notably the ease of shipping it fast and—compared to mailing magazines across the world—cheaply. But a printed magazine is different. In a way that suits this magazine very well.

In the past few years, I have been inspired by the growing number of beautiful print magazines such as Cereal, Kinfolk, and Digest that have taken what is special about print—the beauty of high quality printing and a feel of collectability,

positioning the new magazine somewhere in between the traditional magazine and a book.

As I have been reading these magazines, I haven't helped but notice that I prefer reading them on paper to reading magazines digitally. This is of course a matter of personal preference and I am sure some of you will still want to have your magazine on your digital reading device (computer, tablet, mobile phone) either in addition to the printed magazine or in its place.

That's alright.



If all goes well, you will have the choice between a printed magazine shipped to your doorstep and the digital magazine that you can read on your computer.

Which is where I need your help.

PRE-ORDER TODAY

PRINTING and shipping the magazine to readers around the world is not cheap, and I am not sure whether you agree with me on this, so before jumping in with both feet, I need to do some preparations.

To test your interest and to collect enough money to write, design, print, and ship the first issue in 2014, I have set up [a pre-sale campaign on the crowdfunding site Indiegogo](#). The campaign will be running until the end of the year and if by that time, it reaches its target of \$8,000, the magazine will continue in 2014—with the printing and all. If however, time runs out and the campaign doesn't reach the target, everyone who contributed will be refunded and I will go back to the drawing board.

So, now, if ever, is your chance to have an impact on the future of BREAD. I don't want to put pressure on you—I am more than happy with your support already—but IF the idea of having the magazine in print excites you, or you want to make sure the magazine will still be here next year, don't wait until after the campaign. If you are not interested in getting the magazine on paper, there is a digital-only subscription option for you.

AT THE TIME of writing, many of you have already contributed in the pre-sale campaign, and we have now collected \$4,702 of the \$8,000 goal. That's almost 60% of the goal!

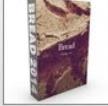
It is a nice accomplishment in itself but it also means that we still need to collect the remaining 40%. So, at the risk of repeating myself, now is your chance to decide whether you want this move to happen or not.

Every contribution matters. [And we have some pretty nice pre-sale options to choose from!](#)

Bring BREAD to Print | Indiegogo

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 **Bring BREAD to Print**

BREAD is a magazine for people passionate about great bread and craft values. After two years of digital publishing, it's time to bring the magazine into print.

Food – Vantaa, Finland

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from Insanely Interested  

Bring Bread to Print

\$4,702 USD
Raised of \$8,000 Goal

14 days left

[CONTRIBUTE NOW ▶](#)

Fixed Funding
This campaign will only receive funds if at least \$8,000 USD is raised by its deadline. Funding duration: November 16, 2013 - December 31, 2013 (11:59pm PT).

Select a Perk for your contribution

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THANK YOU FOR READING!