

Success by accident

IT COULD BE THAT MANY CHANGES IN THE LIFE OF CHARLES NEGARO WERE TRIGGERED BY LUCK BUT THIS DOES NOT HIDE THE FACT THAT HIS CHABASO BAKERY HAS TURNED INTO A SERIOUS PLAYER ON THE BAKERY MARKET IN AND AROUND NEW YORK



+ Charles Negaro is a person who would have fitted comfortably into the 1968s movement in Europe. He was someone who experienced and was actively involved in the social and cultural changes that took place at the end of the 1960s and who retained some of this easy-going, positive life style and was therefore open to change himself.

He turned to baking by pure chance but did so with a lot of enthusiasm and verve. He was the son of a grocery store operator from Waterbury, Connecticut and began his career as a jurist. When he was in his mid thirties, he founded a chain of bookstores called Atticus in New Haven where he offered food 'for thought' and food 'to eat' such as soups and salads. In terms of bread as an accompaniment, he knew precisely what he wanted – baguettes of the same quality that he has eaten before on his many trips to Paris. He took over the catering company that had previously supplied him and began baking bread. Charles Negaro turned into a bread fanatic. He studied baking and baked goods, had discussions with bakers, attended training courses in France and the US and finally sold all of his bookstores, except for the first and



original one at the campus of the Ivy League university Yale. He therefore wholeheartedly turned all of his attention to the bakery business.

To Negaro, this job change was totally normal. "It just was in the air and I started baking." The target groups that he originally aimed for were coffee shops. However, in 1995, when he started with his Chabaso Bakery – the name is derived from the first names of his three children Charlie, Abigail and Sophia – the shops had not yet been inspired by the sandwich culture. Therefore, Negaro looked for another target group. He found it – the 'up market' supermarkets within a radius of 100 miles around New York. Today, he is very happy about this as business with the supermarkets is much more stable in these times of financial crisis than the sales in the food service segment.

Negoro's success is based on two important factors: He uses traditional French and Italian processes with poolish and levain, long dough resting times and no preservatives, although he has "Americanized" his products. He has introduced flavors that please the American palate such as a ciabatta ►



++ figure 1
The new dough sheet line by WP

++ figure 2
The ciabattas are placed on peel boards

++ figure 3
Ciabatta production

++ figure 4
Charles Negaro, owner of Chabaso



++ figure 5

++ figures 5 + 6 + 7

The Chabaso product range comprises different types of stick bread. The bakery claims to deliver 'bread pleasure' at a price that one can afford every day



++ figure 6



++ figure 7

with roasted garlic where the roasting of the tuber provides for a hint of sweetness.

The product range is limited to bread: ciabatta, baguettes, batards, rolls and bread sticks – a total of 20 different articles. The daily delivery quantity is 20-50 tons. Most of the products are dispatched as fresh products packed in cardboard boxes. However, since the inauguration of the first frozen storage facilities two years ago, Chabaso can now also deliver frozen products to supermarkets in the Mid-Atlantic States and Florida.

Negoro has hesitated over a period of time as to automation of the production of his ciabattas. "It is not easy to replace the quality of our manual work. I had, for a long time, looked for appropriate equipment for our products. Finally, I decided to go for a line by Werner & Pfleiderer." Pat Kennedy is the long time representative of Werner & Pfleiderer on the American continent. In cooperation with Negaro the dough sheeting line by WP was installed in the bakery.

Pat Kennedy explains: "Today, the ciabatta range as well as batard bread, baguettes and garlic sticks are made on this line. The dough used at high proof has a dough hydration of approximately 78%, high preferment content and a long dough rest."

After the dough scaling in the relaxer, the dough chunks are placed onto the flour dusted trough-shaped belt below. After the flour duster, both of the belt's sides are lifted by lateral guides thus also ensuring uniform flour coverage to the sides of the belt. The concave roller which resembles a small drum pushes the dough chunks which slightly overlap to the outside. In this way,

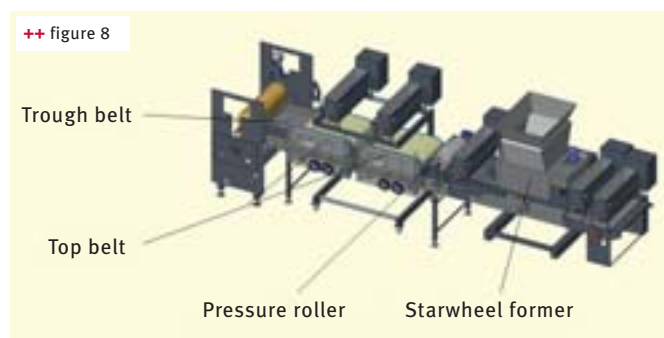
the surface of the dough sheet that is to be produced is already uniform.

Subsequently, two flour dusted top belts slightly press down on the dough sheet. Due to the overall flour coating, a surface is formed that prevents the dough sheet from running apart later and provides for a certain additional firmness. At the same time, the individual dough chunks are combined uniformly and gently. The plane pressure of the top belts lets the different proofing bubbles merge. "This is favorable for the structure of the dough. The dough sheet is then gently gauged in the subsequent dual satellite unit (DUO SAT). Careful application of the following cross and calibrating rollers support the further uniformity of the dough sheet and reduce it to its final thickness. The following processing is dependent on the product", adds Pat Kennedy.

Even though, Charles Negaro has invested several million dollars every year over the past years in order to replace heavy physical work by machines, there are still "a lot of heads involved", according to the entrepreneur, who is now 68. He loves to communicate and have discussions with his employees – 100 of them work in the production – and he enjoys the creative teamwork.

However, he also knows that the time is ripe for expansion even though he wants to stick to his role as a specialist for

European-American bread products. Negaro reports, "We will expand and optimize our facility up until 2010. For the next step, we will need either a partner or we will have to acquire another company. Hopefully by then, my son will have taken over the business and I will only be an adviser." +++



++ figure 8

++ figure 8
Scheme of dough sheeting line

Review: Out-of-home market Europe

Special edition of *baking+biscuit international*

Wrapped sandwiches eaten as snacks, pizza delivered to the doorstep, donuts and coffee to go – modern lifestyle and consumption habits create new markets. The new Review presented by *baking+biscuit international* provides a survey of these new markets where baked goods play an important role. Aside from a description of the current situation of the European out-of-home market, the review issue offers detailed analyses of individual geographical markets and specific product segments, portraits of key market players as well as technical features on advanced production processes for the most important product categories. The overview of this interesting market seen through the lens of the baking industry is completed by company-specific articles on leading market suppliers.



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