

We love what we do!

AT SÜDBACK IN STUTTGART, GERMANY, THERE WAS A STAND THAT HAD PREVIOUSLY NOT BEEN SEEN AT OTHER EXHIBITIONS. THE SIGN READ: WALTER SCHMIDT BACKTECHNOLOGIE GMBH & CO. KG. THE STAND WAS NOT ONLY NEW, IT WAS ALSO VERY LARGE. THE PRODUCTS SHOWN RANGED FROM A WOOD-FIRED OVEN, AN IN-STORE BAKING OVEN, A THERMO-OIL TROLLEY OVEN TO A COMPLETE ROLLS LINE - ALL AIMED AT ARTISAN BAKERIES. IN THIS INTERVIEW, **WALTER SCHMIDT** EXPLAINS HIS COMPANY TO BAKING+BISCUIT INTERNATIONAL



+ bbi: Mr. Schmidt, what kind of business is this, who are the people behind it, where did the money come from, who put forward the ideas and what product range are you offering?

+ Schmidt: I founded the company Walter Schmidt Backtechnologie GmbH & Co. KG. on February 2, 2008, in Feuchtwangen, Germany. I am the sole owner and General Manager of the company, abbreviated WSB. As we are a family-managed company and as I have numerous contacts from my former professional activities, there were no problems in finding the right staff members for my company. Following our motto, "We love what we do", all colleagues and employees are highly committed. The customer feels this right from the beginning. I always had a good sense of business and was active in an entrepreneurial way. So the idea of founding my own business was implemented quickly after my last job was terminated. Finally, I have been able to develop and implement my own ideas. The financial frame was rapidly defined and secured. As a result, all our activities are geared to expansion. The market is waiting for a new system supplier, and WSB is ready for the market. As a system supplier, we are able to cover almost all requirements that bakers have which includes our new logistics system for in-store bakeries.

+ bbi: When someone enters a market as a novice, he must offer something that is either much better or much cheaper than the existing products in this market. In what direction are you heading?

+ Schmidt: The question must be: "What will help the baker in the future?" Our WSB team is convinced that we can only survive in this highly competitive market if we provide solutions that have an added value for our customers.

Prerequisite is that we have products which are outstanding in their performance. We have already developed such products together with our customers.

+ bbi: Could you please explain this in detail? For example, what makes your wood-fired oven so outstanding that it is worth customers opting for it?

+ Schmidt: There are different wood-fired oven systems on the market, which involve all the benefits and shortcomings of this specific heating technology. However, the question is: "How intelligently does the control handle the energy input for this oven?" We are able to adjust the energy input precisely for the product. This makes all baked goods reproducible at any time.

+ bbi: Controlling the energy input by demand sounds economically and ecology-minded. How about an energy comparison between this type of oven and a gas or oil-heated cyclotherm oven?

+ Schmidt: Any material, no matter whether it is iron or stone, can only pick up and store a certain amount of energy within a certain period of time. The excess energy is dissipated and discharged through the chimney or used in a heat

exchanger for the production of warm water. This is the reason why we apply our advanced MIP control for the Flammador oven. Compared to a cyclotherm oven, the energy costs are 40-50% less than those required for heating with oil or gas. Of course, the deviating prices for wood pellets must be considered.

+ bbi: How long does it take for the oven to reach its baking temperature again after one batch of baked products has been finished and removed?

+ Schmidt: Presuming that the oven is loaded at 300 °C and the products are baked following a descending temperature curve to 220 °C, the heat-up time is about 30 minutes plus some time for equalizing. However, the release for loading is only given after the stone has been confirmed to be ready for baking again.

+ bbi: The range of in-store baking ovens that can be purchased in Europe ranges from a spiced up grill to a small production oven. On which side of the scale does your oven stand and why?

+ Schmidt: Many customers visiting our stand at Südback immediately recognized the sophisticated development behind our Panador Shop in-store baking oven. Our own market analysis and predominantly our discussions with sales personnel in the bakeries pointed us in the right direction. Again and again we were confronted with the following complaints:

- + The control is a mystery to us
- + The programming needs too much effort
- + Fear of cleaning the glass windows
- + High breakdown rate of the ovens
- + Poor finishing and sharp edges
- + Costs too high
- + Service and spare parts are too expensive
- + Central unit break down and with this the entire oven
- + Radiation too high
- + Oven bakes too fiercely

Together with our Development Manager, Michael Schroeder, and with Josef Opelka of Opelka Company, along with our Service Team Manager for Baden-Württemberg, Wolfgang Lutz, we designed our own individual solutions, e.g. a door that opens to the outside for cleaning (patent pending). Our specific MIP control will be used for all WSB products because it facilitates the handling by the sales personnel significantly.

Each module of our Panador Shop oven has its own individual control making it independent from a central computer. Added to that, the control is thermally insulated from the oven, and via connector system, it can be replaced without high service costs. Our modular system fulfills (almost) all requirements that today's baker demands.



++ Walter Schmidt

+ bbi: In the field of thermo-oil ovens, you are representing the Daub Company. Why did you feel that you had to expand your product range by thermo-oil ovens?

+ Schmidt: Experienced bakers know that each system has its own characteristics and they appreciate that. As a system supplier, we cannot omit the new Daub systems otherwise our consultation service would be incomplete. In particular, the new thermo-roll oven, Artisan Stone by Daub, will succeed in the market. With its built-in stone plates, it is an all-purpose oven in the bakery suitable for almost all products.

There is no need to store the hot stone plate in the baking area when changing the product. This oven has its own characteristics and can be operated around the clock. The automatic loading system is designed to handle almost any type of product.

+ bbi: It seems now that it is just the rack oven missing for a complete picture. Do you see it that way?

+ Schmidt: Of course! 25 years experience in the market has left its mark on me and created the desire for a perfect rack oven. Now, I have fulfilled my dream with our new rack oven Brise FO. For this oven, Josef Opelka and I combined our experience and know-how. In the course of the joint development work, we were surprised to learn how much energy, commonly available systems, are still consuming.

Therefore, our benchmarks for this oven in terms of energy savings, juiciness and homogeneity of the baked goods were very high. Another factor important to us was the operating cost. Sturdy construction of the drive without turning table for almost all racks on the market was a must as was the new MIP control. There are ovens commercially available that need so much energy within an eight hour shift that it is almost possible to finance a new WSB oven just with the energy cost savings. ▶

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+ bbi: The biggest problems that a bakery encounters today with its equipment are service, spare parts and downtimes. Service technicians and spare parts are expensive and not always immediately available. Did these aspects play a role in the construction of your ovens?

+ Schmidt: During the development, we opted for long service life and profitability. In particular, in the automotive industry, there are sophisticated technologies that are also cost-efficient. All parts were subjected to an endurance test to verify that they would withstand the harsh requirements in a bakery. Service and related costs must be affordable. This is our credo and we will implement this rapidly. It is not only the purchasing price that is decisive but rather the entire system with the oven or line.

+ bbi: Can you offer your services area-wide and what type of service can a customer expect from you prior to purchase and after purchase?

+ Schmidt: We guarantee our customers that his WSB product will be ready for operation for the next production. To achieve this, our own service team is available day and night as are our partners on the market. They are all trained to maintain our products and spare parts are available. Service to us is not limited to after-sales service but also includes the commissioning by our own Master Baker Torsten Siller.

+ bbi: Today, all manufacturers of bakery machines have suppliers that provide components and/or entire machines or ovens, respectively. How does this work with you and how do you ensure quality control and warranty?

+ Schmidt: The Panador deck oven is produced according to WSB specifications. Our manufacturing partner has 40 years experience in heating gas circulation technology; his know-how is just as convincing. For many customers, the oven is an "old acquaintance". All our suppliers have at least 20 years on the market and their business is healthy – this ensures reliable spare parts supply and function in the future as well. Our Head of Development, Michael Schroeder and his team are responsible for the quality check of our products.

+ bbi: You founded your company in February 2008. How is your business progressing and what fields are the bakers most interested in?

+ Schmidt: Since our appearance, in October, at Südback, the WSB Company, with its partners, has been accepted as a system supplier. The launch of the new products will be completed in January 2009. It will be interesting to see what ideas we will come up with. The sales and distribution for South Germany and Austria is running smoothly; we will soon expand our sales activities throughout all of Germany. Our current orders at hand are not allowing us to take

breath. On the contrary, we have had to increase our staff numbers in order to stay on top of everything.

We distribute in all sectors, including the Munz system refrigeration technology, Pick/Gostol or our own developments; we focus on everything. Nevertheless, there is my personal favorite product, our wood-fired oven Flammador.

+ bbi: How far will your distribution net span? What sizes of bakeries do you intend to win as customers?

+ Schmidt: WSB, with its trained sales and service people, is able to advise and handle all customers from the artisan baker to the industrial bakery with high competence. My experience and knowledge and the experience and know-how of my employees and colleagues will convince every customer that he has found the right partner with WSB.

+ bbi: In which regions are you active right now and what distribution areas are you striving for in the ideal scenario?

+ Schmidt: Our sales activities, in 2008, are still focused in Germany and Austria. Of course, we will expand our internal organization in a way so that we can handle a "small" part of the export market in the future.

+ bbi: The world right now, is sliding into a recession. This is probably not the most favorable time for starting a new business. Are you concerned about that?

+ Schmidt: What about 1945? Were times better then? Our fathers and mothers did not give up and I and my employees and colleagues couldn't agree more. We will not wait for the government to support us. The market is not my concern because we know what we can do.

I just hope that our company will be treated fairly and that our performance will be recognized.

+ bbi: You have been active in the bakery trade for 30 years. How do you assess the chances that artisan bakeries have in the traditional medium-sized oriented bakery markets in Austria, Germany or even the Benelux States?

+ Schmidt: I am positive that the small and medium-sized bakeries will experience increased pressure from the larger craft bakeries and the industrial bakeries. However, there are sufficient companies that have shown how to withstand this pressure after they have recognized that it is time to react. When looking at the market with open eyes; much can be learned. France is a good example of this. Here, small and industrial bakeries exist quite well next to each other. Everybody knows his strengths and uses them. The team at WSB will do everything needed to make sure that our customers will be able to work profitably in the future as well.

+ bbi: Thank you very much for your frank answers. We wish you and your company all the best for the future. +++

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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