

Q&A

with Cargill's Master Bakers



Master Bakers Tim Christensen and Bill Gilbert know their way around the bakery business. Between them, they have more than 75 years of baking experience, with a third of those years at Cargill. As certified Master Bakers, they belong to an elite group of professionals – two of approximately 200 in North America. Their combined work experience includes stints at retail bakeries, restaurants, in-store bakeries and wholesale bakeries. Given their resumes, it's no wonder they are often bakers' first call for help.

What are the big trends driving change in the bakery business?

CHRISTENSEN: This is a dynamic time in bakery with many forces converging on the industry. From a regulatory standpoint, bakeries have already reformulated to remove partially hydrogenated oils from their products. That conversion is nearly complete as the June 2018 deadline draws closer. However, we've yet to see what impact the updated nutrition panels, complete with bolder calorie counts and added sugar call-outs, will have on the industry.

GILBERT: In the retail bread space, bakers are definitely looking at line extensions. Options like fiber and whole grains are well merchandized, but with sales stagnant or even declining, bakers are looking toward other functional claims. Given its popularity across food and beverage segments, protein breads seem well positioned to be the next big thing.

We haven't even touched on clean label, which at least in the bread aisle, is probably the number one priority for most bakeries.

So what's behind the big push for label-friendly loaves?

GILBERT: Across the food and beverage industry, consumers are looking for shorter ingredient statements made with names they recognize. The bread industry knows that better than anyone. Many bakeries recall the backlash when blogger Vani Harri linked azodicarbonamide (ADA) to yoga mats. After scrambling to remove ADA from their bread formulas, bakers realized some of their other tried-and-true ingredients were also less appealing to consumers. For obvious reasons, popular dough conditioners sodium stearoyl lactylate (SSL), DATEM (diacetyl tartaric acid esters of mono- and diglycerides), and monoglycerides (MGDs) topped the list.

Tim and I spent two years testing and validating a simple solution using Cargill's premium lecithin products and enzymes to replace all four of those ingredients. In the end, we were able to eliminate the entire dough conditioner package without adding a single ingredient to the product label.

CHRISTENSEN: Clean label trends are something we continue to watch closely. For example, in some foods, manufacturers are starting to remove modified starches. Right now, most bakers aren't concerned about having them on the ingredient statement, but we've gone ahead and developed a replacement solution based on corn starch. Our job is to look into the future and have solutions ready to go.

Let's talk about protein, which is generating sales in most every food and beverage segment. Can bakeries capitalize on this trend?

GILBERT: Protein continues to be huge and we're seeing it spill into a wide range of baked goods – from breads to waffles and about anything in between. It can be a challenge to find the right mixture of proteins to deliver a quality bread. However, we've used Cargill's pea protein products to create a bread with 9 grams of total protein that is to die for. Cookies, muffins, pancake formulas. You name it and we can help pack more protein in it.

CHRISTENSEN: The big difference with Cargill is the hours we've spent in the lab. Since all proteins have different water absorption rates, adding them to baked goods can really mess up a formula. To compensate, Bill and I have done countless studies with different protein types and blends, learning how to keep the rheology the same so product developers don't have to dramatically change the water in the formula. We also know what blends work best in a given application, ensuring that the added protein doesn't impact the taste or texture of the product and the dough can run down the production line. We've done this groundwork so our customers can get their new products to market faster.

Are there other ingredient trends you're seeing in the bakery space?

GILBERT: The number of finished products with Non-GMO Project Verified certification is amazing – and it seems destined to grow. Cargill recently received Non-GMO Project Verification for a number of products, including stevia, erythritol, chicory root fiber and all of our starches and maltodextrins. That means we now have a full toolbox of Non-GMO Project Verified ingredients for bakers who want to offer products with that distinction.

Looking beyond consumer demands, what are the other big issues facing bakeries?

GILBERT: It might seem surprising, but maintaining control of their intellectual property is an issue. Many of our customers do a lot of co-packing, and that highlights the need for adequate security. Most bakeries guard their formulas like state secrets; they'd rather not release their proprietary formulas to their co-packer. We can tailor-make functional systems for everything from icings to protein blends, and ship them – ready-to-use – to their co-packer. It gives bakeries assurance that their formulas are secure and safeguards accurate measurements.

CHRISTENSEN: Our Custom Texturizing Systems are a great example of how we partner with our customers. We aren't just selling ingredients, we're here to help bakeries be successful. At Cargill, we have a vast tool box, with tested and market-ready solutions, ready for the challenges bakers face today and those they may face in the future. Our singular goal is to create real-world solutions that deliver finished products consumers will purchase again and again.