

THE BAKER BREAD ROLE

AWARD
WINNER

Shanthini Naidoo discovers that movies and baguettes have a lot in common

Paul Zwick was a successful filmmaker in Johannesburg who fled to France, where he studied the art of bread-making and patisserie. A regular at the Bryanston Organic Market where French expats grab his baguettes by the dozen, he recently opened Patisserie de Paris in Blairgowrie.

Why does one leave filmmaking to pursue patisserie and bread-making?

I turned 50 in 2007. I had worked in television and film for 32 years. I woke up one day and wondered if this was all there was to life. I wanted to try something more creative. I had no commitments, so I closed my studio and production company and went to France where I trained in classic French culinary arts. Five years later, I came back home and could not find a decent loaf of bread anywhere.

Tell us about the journey.

I just learnt so much. I ate and experimented. The French are so passionate that they make you learn the language, songs, history to make you understand their food. The top chefs are revered like rock stars. I worked as an intern at hotels and as a dough boy, making 300 baguettes a day, starting at 3am.

Why artisanal bread?

Haste is the enemy of good bread. Artisanal bread is pure. Bread should be made from three ingredients — water, salt and flour — and nothing else. You pay a bit more but you get something made with lots of technique. In France, you aren't allowed to freeze bread and the amounts of yeast are strictly controlled. There are no additives like anti-roping agents to stop it clumping, or shelf-life extenders.

I don't have massive machinery and everything is done by hand. It is a cathartic experience to see the bread rising, you nurture it and prove it and it gets its oven spring. It becomes a living being. I don't use yeast. I have a starter dough which I guard with my life. I even take it on holiday. You can't start over because it takes years to develop a unique taste.

Do you have a favourite loaf or pastry?

Definitely a good baguette. Not a "French loaf" made from premix, no. There are seven different shades on a baguette; it must be cut right so it can bloom. The outside must be crisp but the inside soft with wide open holes, to show it has the right amount of water in it.

Do you eat out?



DIRECTOR OF DOUGH: Paul Zwick with some of the bread he learnt to make in Paris

I rarely eat out. I hate molecular cooking. The less you do with food the better. Nature has given us wonderful products, why do we mess with it so much?

What is the best thing to snack on while watching a movie?

A fresh baguette with hummus, some good cheese and cold meat. Especially if I am watching *MasterChef* or *Isidingo*.

Are there any similarities between filmmaking and baking?

Both are creative processes because it depends on how you mix it. Both bakers and television directors keep long, unsociable hours. More often than not I am

up before sunrise. With both, they take so much time but the product is consumed quickly and it's gone. And people come from far and wide for a film, or a good loaf of bread. Either industry will kill you in six months if you don't have a passion for it.

What is harder to make, a perfect love scene or a perfect loaf?

There is far more joy in baking. In those quiet, early morning hours, it is just you and the dough. It is a zen experience.

Patisserie de Paris is at 9 Mackay Avenue, Blairgowrie. Open every day from 6.30am. 011 326 0913