

Bakery Boom!



Image: Lindsay Cotter, Unsplash

“In-store bakeries are on the rise globally, and South African retailers and wholesalers are, likewise, rising to the occasion. Quality products, top-notch ingredients and skilled bakers are turning local in-store bakeries into destination shopping points across all consumer segments.”

Baked goods have always been a source of comfort. The aroma, the taste, the joy of giving and receiving – they simply cannot be matched. And bread is undeniably one of the most basic of staples for millions of consumers.

However, running a successful in-store bakery, complemented by an appropriate selection of fresh and frozen offerings, baking aids, ingredients, and easy-bake products, is no cake walk.

Electricity aside, there are various factors including wastage, hygiene, skills, cost management, packaging, quality, competition, and changing consumer tastes to consider. Finding the right mix of household staples, impulse buys, innovative products, and convenience offerings for different meal solutions is essential.

Bakery trends

Better health. Glanbia Nutritionals predicts that, “While convenience, affordability, and taste will continue to be important aspects of bakery products for consumers, health is driving the bakery trends for 2024.” Knowing your customer base, targeting your market, and staying abreast of trends and innovations is crucial to your bakery’s success.

An increase in bread sales. Market predictions suggest that bread sales across the world are growing, and according to Innova’s Category Survey 2023, freshness, flavour, and cost are the biggest considerations for consumers. Locally, health benefits and shelf-life are increasingly important. The survey noted that Africa has an above average use of high fibre, low fat, vegetarian, and vegan claims on bread launches. Also in the survey, Tiger Brands reported that bread volume production is recovering well, which is likely due to cash-strapped consumers turning to foods that are filling and affordable, while also being acceptably nutritious. While fresh bread leads the market, alternatives such as frozen, preserved, and heat-and-eat bread are other growing trends.



www.castlelager.co.za/bread-nation-press

New launches. One of the interesting bread launches in South Africa in 2023 was an initiative called Bread of the Nation from Castle Lager, which uses by-products of its beer brewing process to produce bread that is



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high in fibre, sustainable and a source of protein. The initiative, which is part of Castle Lager's Better World Programme, sees the by-product from high-quality, locally grown grains repurposed to produce approximately 30 000 loaves for South African communities.

The bread is made by baked goods producer The Health Food Company and Castle Lager is working with an NGO called SA Harvest to use its distribution footprint and partnerships to distribute the bread nationally to various beneficiaries.

The initiative ties in with the South African Breweries and Castle Lager's zero-waste and sustainability commitments, as well as to reduce hunger and food insecurity. The launch took place in Walkerville, south of Johannesburg on 8 March 2023 and Castle Lager will run it for three years to assess its feasibility.

Gluten-free. Gluten-free is a reality for manufacturers, suppliers, producers, retailers and wholesalers.

“ Research shows that food intolerances and allergies are on the rise. No longer on the fringe, gluten-free diets are being followed for many reasons, and it is because of this that in-store bakeries should examine their gluten-free strategies. ”

There are several options available locally, but gluten-free consumers may tell you that the good ones are expensive and hard to find, and that the more affordable offerings generally don't have the right taste and don't deliver what baked goods are

Image: American Heritage Chocolate, Unsplash



supposed to. Smaller artisanal and independent bakeries seem to be ahead of the big retailers in terms of getting gluten-free right, but no doubt research and development will soon change that in this highly competitive market. Serious time spent in gluten-free product recipe development and testing is a sound investment, and, once you have your product, it should be marketed well. Not all consumers are quick to spot new offerings, and others shop infrequently or only online, making uptake likely to be slower for niche products.

In this instance, effective marketing and communication with your customer base is imperative.

A good starting point for a gluten-free range could be a basic bread suitable for toasting and for making cold sandwiches and rolls, and then some sweet and savoury options including scones, muffins, and wraps.

Low- or no-sugar and low sodium. These options are also becoming particularly important to consumers. Incorporating various dietary requirements into your bakery product offerings now is a good way to futureproof your bakery.

Fortification. Food that's good for you is a growing trend across the FMCG market, especially in the bakery. Breads and other baked goods that incorporate added protein and high fibre, or being fortified with vitamins and minerals, or superfood ingredients, are fast gaining popularity.

Added vitamins, iron, calcium, and protein are also terminologies that are becoming more well-known in the South African market.

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A Euromonitor report on Baked Goods in South Africa says ...

“ There is likely to be growing demand for healthier versions of packaged leavened bread from discerning consumers in the coming years, in line with the strengthening health and wellness trend. Fortification, with micronutrients such as zinc and essential vitamins, is mandatory according to local legislation; however, innovation from brands generally focuses on adding specific value to packaged leavened bread through other fortifications such as protein. ”

Increased interest in food labels. Listing the ingredients of your products and making it easy for consumers to work out serving sizes as well as the nutritional information for that serving size, can be a purchase driver. Consumers looking to lose, gain, or maintain their weight or improve their eating habits want to know how many calories they're consuming. They also want to know how much fat, protein, fibre, and sugar is in their food.

“ New legislation regarding food labelling and advertising has been proposed by the South African Minister of Health and should this come into play, will impact food labelling significantly, including products from the bakery. ”

The legislation has been proposed with honourable intentions but is being seen by the industry as controversial in terms of cost and application.

Image: www.richs.co.za/



However, as internationally, the baked goods industry is taking this move towards more balanced, nutritious eating to heart, there is no reason why South Africa should not follow suit for all consumer segments. In a country where half of all adults are overweight (23%) or obese (27%), healthier eating should be seen as an imperative – and the in-store (and independent) bakery can still thrive in such an environment. Unhealthy diet is a major risk factor for noncommunicable (not spread through infection) diseases such as cancer, diabetes and heart attacks, and being overweight or obese present a greater risk of developing these conditions. For many baked goods, good health is the elephant in the room, but it is possible to create an amazing array without sacrificing health.

Perhaps display signage at the bakery that assists consumers to choose ('Good Health', 'Little Treats', 'Avoid the Scale') in addition to product labelling could tackle the topic head on, and of course if the new legislation comes into effect, it will be impossible to ignore.

Authenticity and transparency. False or misleading claims or a negative experience can cause much damage to a brand or store's equity and reputation. Social media ensures a bad experience races around super-fast, but on the other hand delicious baked goods posted on Insta or TikTok will garner likes and hearts – just be sure to subtly stamp any visuals you post with the name of your store or corporate logo, otherwise it will be lost in the share.

New flavours and ingredient pairings. Upcoming trends making their mark in baked goods are fresh and exciting, with vibrant florals and subtle herbal infusions causing a stir among both foodies and home bakers. Other flavour and ingredient trends to bring into your bakery are tastes of tea, lavender, citrus, hot and spicy,

and savoury pairings such as ricotta and thyme in traditionally sweet goods. Of course, there is still a massive market for the traditional South African baked goods favourites, so it's important not to consider these as boring or redundant when your customers still love them!

Make it a baked experience

In addition to meeting basic nutritional needs and niche dietary requirements, shoppers also want baked goods that will stimulate their senses and impress their guests. Even cash-strapped shoppers will spend a little more when guests are 'coming over'. Ensuring that your range includes affordable treats or even mini versions of milk tarts, cheesecakes, Chelsea buns, red velvet cakes or mini muffins will add to the impress factor while remaining within their budget.

A visually enticing display and the customer's sense of smell are a bakery's best friend. Taste should be next in line, and while samples are not always practical, they are a proven tactic for increasing sales. Your staff are equally important.

A friendly, engaging, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable baker and bakery staff are enchanting. They elevate the shopping experience and encourage shoppers to indulge or try something new.

Visiting an in-store bakery should always be a delight. Off-putting smells, a messy display or a less than pristine set up can be devastating for sales. If your customers aren't fighting the urge to buy a loaf of fresh bread, indulge in something sweet and tasty, or treat the family to a savoury bake, you missed an opportunity.

Innovations driving effective bakery management



Image: www.bizerba.com/za/en

Energy efficient processes and waste-reducing innovations are hot topics in bakery management. These include scheduling your bakes to start off with the hottest temperatures, and then reducing the temperature gradually as you work through bakes requiring lower temperatures. This is the most efficient way to manage your oven temperatures and it makes planning much simpler.

Temperature sensors, timers, and automatic controls designed to keep your ovens and proofers running as efficiently as possible are easy to install on older models and come standard with newer ranges. By incorporating data-driven and IoT-based connected solutions, and employing artificial intelligence, the bakeries of the future will be more effectively and optimally run.

At an international level, companies like Bizerba are investing in innovative technology to help manage processes and systems become even more efficient. Recently launched in Europe, the Smart Shelf is designed to reduce waste as a result of overproduction. This intelligent rack is well-suited to baked goods and uses weight sensors to detect when a product has been removed while documenting the rack position.

Part of its smart functionality allows it to detect when a product, such as rolls, is running low. It then sends a signal to the automatic baking machine, which activates the appropriate baking programme for a predetermined quantity.

Bizerba has employed artificial intelligence to forecast sales based on recorded data, optimising the baking done over the course of the day. Taking things a step further, Bizerba states that prices on the racks can be dynamically adjusted and automatically updated by the system. This could be used, they say, to sell off surplus stock before closing time instead of having to dispose of it as waste. Although this product is not yet available in South Africa, it is innovative technology such as this that retailers can take into consideration when planning your bakery's successful future.



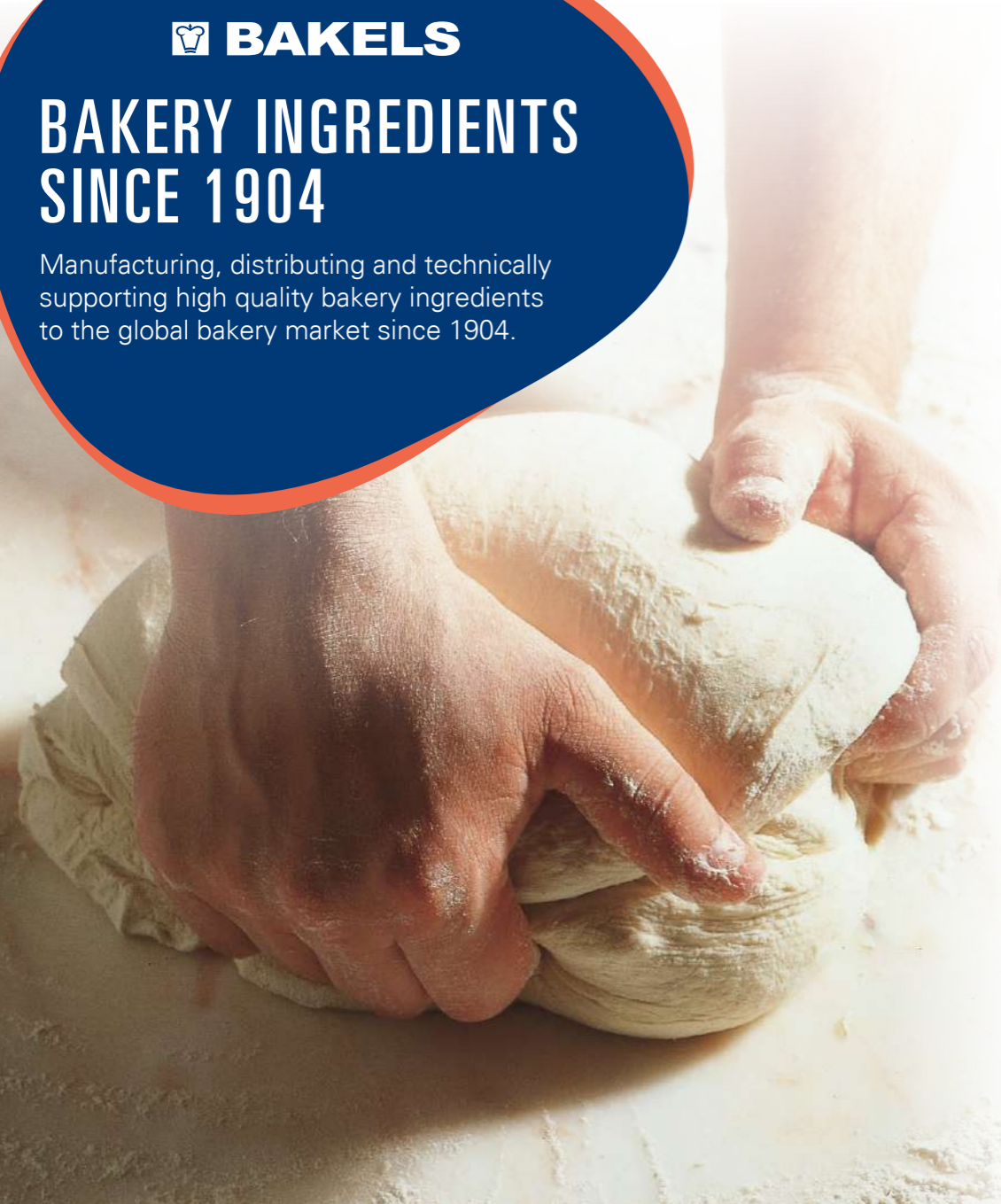
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Convenience culture

Easy answers to life's baked goods questions are a necessity as well as a pleasure. Sliced bread is one of the best-known 'convenience' purchases. Sales of pre-packed, frozen, and heat-and-eat products are growing across the FMCG market, and the bakery is no different. Customers want to be able to pop in and pick up a showstopper cake, grab a sumptuous dessert for two, or whip up a tasty tea-time feast in minutes. Parties, celebrations, occasions, and even meetings are made easier by your store's well-stocked bakery.

Catering and food service

Catering and food service are an important aspect of many an in-store bakery. If your store provides these services, they need to be dependable and of a very high standard.

Catering and food service trends

- Health and safety protocols remain as critical as ever
- More fresh ingredients and more greens
- Ingredients: avocado, lemon, kale, arugula, quinoa and root vegetables
- Free-from is vital on the catering and food service menu
- Less meat, more vegetables
- Milk alternatives
- Sustainability and the reduction or elimination of single use plastics
- Chips (potato, sweet potato), but in healthier formats (less salt, air fried, less oil)

Image: www.tigerbrands.com/



- Eco-friendly, functional and effective packaging
- Fusion menus
- Local ingredients and less or zero waste
- Healthier versions of traditional favourites
- Small or bite-sized options of pizza, pies, cakes, desserts.

In her article, *4 Retail baking trends for 2024, for Craft to Crumb*, Mari Rydings notes that mindful indulgence is going strong, with mini treats and bite-sized servings still popular. Rydings quotes Gale Gand, pastry chef and co-founder of a Michelin two-star restaurant, who says, "Desserts in general are very clean, geometric, shiny, and perfect. They are little palettes of artwork." Gand identified pies and tarts as popular favourites, but in cubes and square shapes. It's about fun, creativity, and personalisation for your bakery. In the UK, British Baker (www.bakeryinfo.co.uk) predicts that over-the-top maximalism will be taking over from the minimalist aesthetic of the last few years.

It's clear that in-store bakeries can gain a lot from enhancing and re-strategising their product offering, range, commitment to service, catering and food service options. This department can be your drawcard and an excellent way to build relationships with your shoppers, bringing in your regular customers and attracting new shoppers too. Make it one more reason to be proud of your store! **SR**

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Ann Baker-Keulemans writes on topics related to business, lifestyle, technology, and health, with extensive knowledge on the SA retail and wholesale landscape. Contact annbk@wilkinsross.co.za | www.wilkinsrossglobal.com



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