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# Dish: The Triangle's Golden Age of Bread Is Fueled by Local Grains

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By Ciranna Bird, February 27, 2019

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Weaver Street Market's Jon McDonald, by Bob Karp

Standing in a commercial kitchen, looking at a spongy substance the color of cardboard, Andrew Ullom asks if I can smell the boozy flavor of his rye pre-ferment. This substance, the starter for all his rye

breads, contains water, lactic bacteria, wild yeast, and Wrens Abruzzi rye flour from Carolina Ground. (The smell of alcohol is created by the breakdown of complex rye starches into simple sugars during fermentation.) This starter ensures that his loaves of 100 percent rye bread ferment well, are strong, and develop flavors that he describes as “acidic, fruity, and effervescent like rosé wine.”

Bakers like Ullom, of the forthcoming bakery Union Special, can get their hands on freshly milled flour from locally grown grains thanks to North Carolina mills such as Carolina Ground in Asheville and Lindley Mills in Graham. Bakers across the Triangle seek out these flours not only because they support local agriculture, but because they create breads and pastries that are fresher, more nutritious, and packed with distinct textures and flavors.

It’s something that Ullom has long believed, but this notion was reinforced when he attended last year’s Asheville Bread Festival, where he toured wheat fields and spoke with North Carolina organic grain farmers.

“It is sobering to see the amount of work [it takes] to bring grains to the mill, to mill the flour, and to package it to bring to the baker,” he says. “The advantage for North Carolina bakers is that we can make bread that tastes like North Carolina, particularly eastern North Carolina. Our bread is affected by the minerals in our water and in our grain.”

Jon McDonald, the bread baker manager at Weaver Street Bakery, also sources flour from local mills. He works with twelve bread bakers to make two thousand pounds of dough a day for the Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Pittsboro Weaver Street Market locations, using Carolina Ground’s bread flour to produce loaves with superior texture and flavor, such as a moist, rich, dark whole-wheat-walnut-raisin loaf, and a rye bread crafted with 70 percent Wrens Abruzzi rye. Jennifer Lapidus, the founder and general manager of Carolina Ground and one of the organizers of the annual Asheville Bread Festival, describes the Wrens Abruzzi rye grown in the South as a “spicy dark flour [that] is lauded among bakers beyond our borders.”

To retain flavors characteristic to each grain, Carolina Ground stone-grinds and cold-mills North Carolina–grown and certified-organic grains, including hard winter wheat, soft winter wheat, and rye. The stone grinding crushes the germ (the section of the wheat kernel that sprouts) into the rest of the flour, which helps the flour retain its natural oils, nutrients, and flavor.

Weaver Street Bakery also uses flour from Lindley Mills, a family-owned, organically certified mill that uses a stone-grinding technique to make some of its flours and a customized low-heat roller mill for other flour products.

“Very high-heat milling environments sometimes cause concern because of the potential for damaging nutrients in flour,” explains Caroline Lindley, vice president of marketing and sales and a part of the tenth generation to work at the mill. “[It’s believed that] a low-heat environment may better maintain nutrient retention in the transition from grain to flour.”

McDonald uses Lindley Mill’s Malted X flour to make Weaver Street’s number one seller, a baguette, and Lindley Mills Super Sprout whole grain wheat flour to make a sprouted sandwich bread, which has a

soft texture like supermarket bread but contains less sugar and more nutrients than bread made with non-sprouted flour. Although Lindley Mills sources the bulk of its wheat from the Midwest, Lindley says that both the Malted X and Super Sprout flours also contain certified organic wheat grown by North Carolina farmers, and the mill also produces a 100 percent North Carolina-grown bread flour.

Both mills find ways to provide a viable market for local farmers who are willing to use organic methods to grow hard winter wheat varieties that are ideal for bread flours. Traditionally, farmers in the South grow a soft winter wheat that is more suitable for pastries and biscuits. Lapidus says that the North Carolina-grown soft winter red wheat that is milled for Carolina Ground's pastry flour delivers extraordinary vibrancy and tooth, which can be both a boon and a challenge for local bakers.

Shelby L. Smith, of the Durham-based pop-up bakery Whisk and Rye, is known for her scones, cookies, and cruffins (a croissant-muffin hybrid). As part of her mission to use as many local ingredients as possible, she's recently started making her products with Carolina Ground pastry flour.

"It was a learning curve to work with flour made by Carolina Ground," Smith says. "It's different, fresher, and requires more liquid."

She had to tinker with baking ratios, adding more baking powder and adjusting both the proofing (final rise) and baking time. Although the scones made with enriched white flour were lighter and fluffier, they tasted empty, whereas the scone made with Carolina Ground pastry flour tasted sweeter, nuttier, and was ultimately more satisfying.

Contact us at [food@indyweek.com](mailto:food@indyweek.com).

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# Dish: Five Local Bagels We Love

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By Sarah Edwards, Brian Howe, Layla Khoury-Hanold, February 27, 2019

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**Bagel Bar:** New Yorkers will never concede that the kettle-boiled bagels made fresh at this locally owned Durham shop are “NY style,” as advertised, but they’re closer to the mark than the round bread that passes for bagels in much of the Triangle.

**Big Dom’s Bagel Shop:** Big Dom’s, in Cary, is known for Montreal-style bagels, which are smaller, denser, and slightly sweeter than their New York counterparts. Here, they’re boiled with brown sugar and baked with a schmear of Crisco.

**Monuts:** With a crisp crust and soft-yet-sturdy structure, the rounds at this Durham donut shop are ideal for breakfast sandwiches. Try the summer-ready heirloom tomato with chevre and basil pesto.

**NY Bagel & Deli and NYBD III:** Native New Yorkers Bob and Tom Nurrito operate independent locations of NYBD (in Raleigh and Cary, respectively; another brother owns one in NY), but they’re united by a menu of more than two-dozen bagels baked fresh daily.

**Weaver Street Market:** Weaver Street Market—now in Carrboro, Chapel Hill, and Hillsborough—started making bagels in-house five years ago, aiming for an authentic New York style and delivering on the coveted tender-crumbs-to-pleasant-chew ratio.