

THE BAKERY, ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE ENGINE SHED, HUMS WITH ACTIVITY FROM EARLY IN THE MORNING. OUT OF THIS BUSY, HOT AND SOMETIMES NOISY ENVIRONMENT A MIRACLE OCCURS EVERY DAY: BREAD, OATCAKES, PASTIES, PIES, HUMMUS, BISCUITS, TRAY BAKES AND CAKES ALL EMERGE ON TIME FOR USE IN THE ENGINE SHED AND FOR DELIVERY TO OUR VARIOUS WHOLESALE AND RETAIL CUSTOMERS.

A Day in the Life of the Baker

an early start

“Usually I arrive shortly before 7.00am and have about an hour on my own before the trainees arrive. I appreciate this; I can concentrate on the day ahead and think about who is going to do what.

First I check my white board for the day's orders then start on the first batch of bread. Our customers get their bread very fresh; it's out of the oven, into the bread basket and into the van. Sometimes it arrives when it's still warm!

Everything is weighed out from scratch and put in the bread mixing machine: we have two pots, a big one and a smaller one, which I call Major and Minor. I add a bit of leftover dough from the day before to help the new bread: it's more food for the yeast work on.

The wholemeal mix goes in the big pot: on a busy day that could be 50 kilos (80lbs) of dough. Minor is for smaller amounts of bread, like white or granary dough. Both pots will be going at once and some mornings the noise from it humming away and the dough hooks going round and round can be slightly mesmerising. The extractor fan comes on as well, so there's a lot of clanking, whirring and buzzing.

If I don't have the bread going by 8.00am I feel a bit behind schedule. Some days I'm aware things are going to be a bit tight; there's always a sense of urgency.

By the time the trainees come in at 8.30am the mixing is finished. It takes two people to lift the big pot and scoop the dough onto the table. Over the years a groove has worn into the table with the weight. One of the trainees will cut the dough into lumps and weigh them and two or three trainees will shape the dough and put it into tins; sometimes we have as many as 150 loaves to do.

Not everyone works on the bread; some prepare the oatcake mix and I might have a team to roll the oatcakes out. Cakes made the day before might be iced or wrapped up. Twice a week we make hummus as well; a lot can be going on at the same time, especially in the morning.

The mornings and afternoons both have different rhythms in the bakery. There's a highly charged pulse in the morning, more frenetic and energetic: we couldn't sustain that all day long so it's good that there is a more relaxed pulse in the afternoon.

a mid – morning breather

By 10.00am most of the bread is baked or prepared and the first lot of bread is ready to go out to customers on the early delivery. There is always a natural

pause at this time, so trainees go for their tea break. I bring a cup of tea back to the bakery for myself. I need to be on hand to check the bread oven, turn the oatcakes etc but it is a bit of a break for me because I don't have to worry about the trainees.

It can be a challenge for me to keep tabs on everything and everyone. When things are in the oven I have to avoid getting sidetracked, but things can happen, like a trainee knocking over a tin of oil in the storeroom and not knowing how to cope. It only takes a few minutes distraction and the bread will spoil. It's also a challenging training environment and trainees might make a mistake, say making a cake, and I have to work out if it can be rescued. This can create more work for me.



late morning – the final push

After the break there are things to finish off and a lot of cleaning and tidying to be done. By 12.30 the bread for the second delivery is in the bread baskets ready for going out, the oatcakes weighed and wrapped, everything cleaned up and the floors swept. Everyone goes for lunch then; I like to leave with everything having gone to where it should go, in the best condition possible, and for the bakery not to look like a bomb has hit it.

I've had bakery engineers in before who have commented on how spick and span our bakery is compared to other small bakeries.

afternoon

The afternoon has a different rhythm; everything is under control or about to be brought under control. The trainees might replenish the flour bins or grind up oatmeal for the oatcakes; we have a grain mill and all our oatmeal is hand ground from whole grain.

If we're going to make curried pasties the next day, the trainees might peel the potatoes and vegetables. I know quite a bit about curries and we roast our own cumin and coriander for the pasties. All the mixed spices that go in our cakes are also freshly made; we grind up nutmeg or cinnamon in a coffee

grinder. There is room to allocate a lot of these nice little craft jobs that you wouldn't get in a commercial bakery.

The trainees are a very nice lot to work with and generally very amenable; they'll take on whatever job you ask. I'm constantly surprised at how they are so tolerant of one another. There are great differences between them in terms of ability but the ones who are more able, and know they are more able, never make the less able feel inferior. It's a pleasure to see.

Some trainees also ask pertinent questions about things or remind me of something, or offer ideas to improve this or that. I can learn from them as well.

Three afternoons a week, Heather comes in to make cakes and biscuits. She's been a godsend: she just susses out what she needs to do and gets on with it. Technically she's my assistant but she's at least my equal.

In mid-afternoon we have a short tea break before the final clean up of the day. Trainees go home around 4.00pm although I'm rarely away by then. There's always something to do. The last thing is to make sure all the orders for the following day have come down from upstairs; I write this up on my white board ready to start again in the morning.”

Patrick

A Day in the Life of the Bakery Assistant

“I work three afternoons a week from 2.00pm to 7.00pm and my main remit is to come in and produce stuff. I make cakes and biscuits for the café, hospitality and special orders. Green City orders cakes, mostly sticky lemon and coconut cakes, and delivers them to shops and cafés in Glasgow.

There is no typical day here. I'll usually spend ten minutes having a good look round and see what's needed; I'm very flexible. Today we got an order in for 30 packets of shortbread for Saturday; we usually have a few days notice but today I just had to bash on and make the shortbread.

I work as much as possible with the trainees, helping them to fine-tune their skills in, say, rolling out biscuits; I'm very exacting!

I set aside an hour once every few weeks to try something new. The challenge is reining myself in and not getting carried away with what we could be doing. The reality is that everything has to be able to be made by the trainees, so everything has to be related back to how they would cope



with making it. I might be making something for the 30th time and suddenly think 'if I changed it this way the trainees would find it easier.' I don't really see any of it as challenging though; it's a joy working here. I love working for the Engine Shed.”

Heather