

ARTISAN BREADS: FLAVORS OF THE SOUTHWEST

By Zach Langenkamp

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As a native Texan and a Bread Bakers Guild of America member, I was seriously excited when I heard that we were having the first-ever Guild class in Texas, taught by none other than Jeff Yankellow. I'm fortunate enough to have taken several classes from Jeff when he was instructing at the San Francisco Baking Institute; the chance to take another class from him, inspired by new, bold flavors from the Southwest, was too good to pass up. The one day, nine hour class was hosted by the newly opened third campus of the Culinary Institute of America located in San Antonio, Texas. The campus is set among restored buildings of what used to be the Pearl Brewery near downtown San Antonio, and the CIA graciously hosted the class in their brand-new facilities, which was a real treat.

Jeff spent a few minutes at the beginning of the day to explain his vision for the class. He had moved to Arizona over five years ago to open an artisan bakery and was introduced to many ingredients exclusive to the cuisine of the Southwest region, some of which we used in the class to create very interesting, unique flavor profiles. In fact, all the breads we ended up making that day were original recipes Jeff created specifically for the class, and he crafted them in order to showcase not only different flavors but different techniques used in traditional artisan bread baking.

The Southwest Corn and Chili Fougasse incorporated a sponge, along with sweet corn kernels and chopped jalapeño and fresno chilies, and was actually finished in a lye bath for a traditional pretzel finish.

The mild heat from the chilies contrasted perfectly with the sweetness of the fresh corn, and the crust made from baking

after the lye bath was incomparably delicious. The New Mexico Green Chili and Jack batards used a liquid levain, baked potatoes, roasted green chilies (or hatch chilies), roasted garlic, and Monterey jack cheese to pack a serious flavor punch. The potatoes added an incredible soft, moist texture to the final product. Jeff used his Chipotle Garlic Ciabatta not only to highlight the flavors of roasted garlic and chipotle pepper, but also to demonstrate the technique to make a traditional Ciabatta. He explained that for reasons still not completely understood, garlic has a tendency to break down the gluten structure in bread – generally it's safe to use it in amounts of up to 10% in the total formula. To combat this effect, he used a small amount of liquid levain as well as the more traditional poolish to reinforce the strength of the bread.

These three breads all used very interesting ingredients to create great flavor combinations, but the most interesting regional, unique ingredient

had to be the mesquite flour used in the Pecan Mesquite Filones. Mesquite flour (actually more of a meal in texture) is made from grinding the dried seed pods of the mesquite tree which thrives

LEFT: Some of the vibrant ingredients used in the breads that day (jalapeño and fresno chilies, fresh sweet corn)
RIGHT: Closeup of the pecan mesquite filones



TOP LEFT: The breads ready to eat at the end of the day (front to back: Pecan Mesquite Filone, New Mexico Chili and Jack batard, Southwest Corn and Chili fougasse)
BOTTOM LEFT: Jeff Yankellow demonstrates a proper fold during bulk fermentation
RIGHT: Jeff Yankellow demonstrates the do's and don'ts of using a lye bath.

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The Culinary Institute
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Alain Dubernard - Liaison

Instructor

Jeff Yankellow



throughout the Southwest. This flour was an important part of the diet of native North American Indians for centuries, and lends a completely unique flavor and aroma. It also has a very low glycemic index, making it wonderful for diabetics, and is high in protein and low in fat. Jeff fermented all the mesquite flour in the bread in a poolish to bring out the full range of aromas - when I smelled the fully fermented poolish, I was amazed at the rich mix of spices: cocoa, cinnamon, and its own, indescribably exotic scent. The recipe paired this flour with candied orange and roasted pecans, ingredients also found commonly in the Southwest. Because mesquite flour detracts from the overall strength of the final dough,

we added a liquid levain to the mix and incorporated one fold during the bulk fermentation.

It had been a good five years since I had taken a class from Jeff, but I was quickly reminded why he is so well-regarded as a teacher; Jeff possesses that rare ability not only to excel as a master of his craft, but also to convey his considerable knowledge and skill to others in a way that is totally accessible and easy to understand. The flyer for the class labeled the skill level as "intermediate," but the makeup of the class varied from enthusiastic home bakers to veteran professional

bakers, and Jeff smoothly switched gears between explaining the basics of traditional pre-ferments and discussing the subtle nuances of using different levels of levain to influence final dough characteristics. I'm sure that no matter what their skill level, all the students that day walked away with a new appreciation for pairing unusual regional ingredients with traditional artisan techniques to create delicious new breads. ☀

Formula on next page



ABOVE: Abby Thomas practices scoring while Christine Goldsmith looks on TOP RIGHT: Jeff Yankellow answers a question for George Blanford while Phyllis Enloe looks on BOTTOM RIGHT: Pecan Mesquite Bread uses a mesquite poolish and liquid levain, and contains pecan pieces and candied orange peel

PHOTO: PHYLLIS ENLOE