

Farm Bakery Is A Family Affair

By Janis Schole, Contributing Editor

Known in the area as “the bread lady,” Tenito Smith of Bowling Green, Ky. has a booming business selling her baking at a local Farmers’ Market, as well as from her front yard, not to mention catering and supplying a nearby restaurant year-round.

Smith bakes a wide variety of bread products, and also zesty croutons, fresh fruit pies, jams, pickles, bruschetta, and salsa, just to name a few.

She sells her baking on Saturdays at the Farmer’s Market where her husband, Jimmy sells sweet corn, tomatoes, and yellow squash. Peak season for both the baking and the veggies is June, July and August, when the Farmer’s Market is operating two extra days per week.

Jimmy also grows field corn, wheat, and soybeans on the family’s farm, so he particularly appreciates the extensive help he gets from their 18-year-old daughter, Monica, in handpicking the vegetables.

Tenito spends one or two days a week (year-round) baking just for the restaurant. She starts baking for the Saturday’s Farmer’s Market on Thursday morning at 5 a.m., not quitting until 10 p.m. This is repeated on Friday, to be ready for the sale. “I only have Sunday off to rest,” she

says. “I’m used to hard work though, and I loved to cook from an early age. After I got married, I used to cook for six to eight people who worked for us when we farmed 1,500 acres. I fed them a full lunch daily in the field, followed by an afternoon snack of cobbler and then supper at the house.”

Smith started her baking business seven years ago by renting a kitchen to work in. After two years of that, she and her husband converted their garage into a certified, state-inspected kitchen.

The family doesn’t farm as many acres as they used to, instead focusing more on vegetable production.

“Now I cook for a crew of five or six kids during corn picking season,” she says.

She points out that Jimmy does most of the grocery shopping (remember, it’s “large volume” shopping, and “he’s darn good at it!” she says.) Also, when he’s not in the fields, he often slices the apples and peaches for her.

“I try to go outside the realm of what’s normal or common in the products I make – this includes seven-grain honey bread, parmesan-garlic bread, salt-free, sugar-free bread, pies and muffins with Splenda for diabetic customers, and I almost never use mar-



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garine in my baking because of the hydrogenated fat. I don’t use any unnatural preservatives – if I can’t pronounce it, I don’t need or want it in there.”

Tenito prints her own labels (they must meet state regulations and list ingredients) with her computer. This is just another aspect of a business that requires long hours

and hard work, but which she finds rewarding.

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Rural Manufacturer Reaches Out To Teenagers In Foster Homes

Roger Kuntz of Grainfield, Kan., has found a win-win situation by offering jobs to teenagers in foster homes and other disadvantaged youth.

He says many people may not have thought of this angle for filling labor needs, while at the same time providing community help to those who might benefit from a boost.

Kuntz’s business specializes in the repair of Flex-King and Richardson blade plows and he also manufactures several products for industrial supply companies. He used to have trouble finding part-time help.

“I noticed that there were some foster home teenagers who didn’t have cars and were seldom out for sports. The extra time they had, and their willingness to work created an opportunity for both of us,” Kuntz explains. Picking up the workers in my van and sharing and listening to their lives is a great break time for all of us and it seems to give them a purpose while increasing their self esteem.”

Kuntz says there’s also an opportunity to “farm out” assembly work by taking the raw materials to these people’s homes where they can work in a familiar environment.

“We are all handicapped in different ways and there are people out there who don’t have the polished skills to sell themselves, so I think it’s up to us to seek out the needy and bring the jobs to them,” Kuntz says. “I provide them with very safe jobs that are matched to their skill levels, such as assembly and maintenance.

“As I work with these teenagers and handicapped people, they earn self-esteem, income and resource stewardship skills,” he says. “I also have a shop standard that includes politeness, good language, and honesty.”

Kuntz says the advantages of working with youth are that they are adaptable to



Kuntz repairs Flex-King and Richardson blade plows and makes products for industrial supply companies. He matches the teenagers’ skill levels to the jobs and intensely manages their work.

change. Also, they have a creative flair and a gratitude for the opportunity that’s presented to them.

“To the youth, it’s a new, fun and exciting atmosphere because it’s so foreign to them. All of a sudden the video game world is less attractive – this is the world of reality,” he explains. “That’s why I get so excited about working with these people and helping them to let their beauty shine. They feel important and a part of something. I feel that’s a part of what I need to give back for my enjoyment here on earth.”

Kuntz admits that his labor solution does require extreme patience and intense management.

“You have to hover over them like a mother hen because they are just being introduced to new technology and problem-solving. This challenges me to keep elevating my standards to where we have fool-proof jig assemblies and assembly processes,” he says.

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DePorter cuts 800 to 1,000 board ft. a day using a Kasco Saw II. He says a lot of people just want to have a few logs sawed.

Specialty Sawing Business Pays Off For 80-Year-Old

Glen DePorter bought a secondhand portable Kasco bandsaw mill to cut wood for his beehives nearly 16 years ago. Today, the Tennessee sawyer has people coming from as far away as Minnesota and Kansas with loads of specialty wood they want him to run through his mill.

“You have to work out your little niche; you can’t compete with the big sawmills,” says DePorter, soon to be 80 years old. “Just put the word out that you saw lathe stock or wood for rustic furniture, and you’ll have a business. You’ll be amazed how many people have a few logs they want sawed.”

His bandsaw is a simple manual Kasco Saw II. The only powered mechanism on it raises and lowers the band head and powers the saw. Although the saw can be equipped with a second electric motor to move the log carriage back and forth into the blade, DePorter prefers a manual feed.

Although he originally bought the saw for his own use, he quickly developed a list of customers in the local area where there is a strong woodcraft industry. Customers include five dulcimer makers and a man that orders blocks of wood, which he turns into solid wood footballs on his lathe. The football

maker will buy 5,000 to 6,000 board feet of lumber for footballs each year. Specialty jobs have also included sawing steps for a government building in Atlanta, Ga. and cutting out a solid wood shaft for a refurbished historic gristmill.

“It was 24-in. diameter with 16 faces of 3 3/4 in. each,” recalls DePorter. “This little saw did it. It can handle pretty much anything that comes along up to a 36-in. diameter.”

DePorter gives a lot of credit for his sawing success to Kasco. When he first bought the bandsaw mill, it didn’t work. When he called the company, he was invited up to see a working model. Once there, he was able to identify some missing parts. The owner gave him pointers on setting it up and running it, including how to sharpen the blade. Once home, he soon had it running.

While he once had a helper and has sawn up to 3,000 board feet per day, he has since cut back. Today he cuts 800 to 1,000 board feet in a day.

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