

The Bread Peddler and Sewanee Summer Farm Team

This summer I had an internship through the Sewanee Summer Farm Team at The Bread Peddler, a bakery in Monteagle, TN. I worked at the bakery four days a week but also participated in work on campus in the newly-revamped student organic garden and the Cheston farm. The bakery is owned and operated by Scott Bennett and Ginger Freeman at their home. They have a separate building on their property, which is a commercial kitchen and oven room as well as an art studio upstairs. There are two ovens in the oven room: a large (approximately 8'x15') brick oven that is purely wood-fired and a gas convection oven. The brick oven can hold around 40 round loaves or 32 loaves in pans easily.

We bake every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and made pizzas for the Cumberland farmers market on Tuesdays. On bake days, we would start the day at nine am, mixing all the dough first. We would typically need to fill our flour buckets right at the beginning of the day which consisted of lifting and moving several fifty pound bags of flour, either white or whole wheat. Most of our doughs have a pre-ferment, which is made the night before and given anywhere between eight and sixteen hours to ferment before we mix them with the final dough. The pre-ferment consists of flour, water, and then either yeast or a sourdough culture, so the flavor of the bread is developed in this first phase. We mix the ferments with additional flour, water, yeast, and anything else (like rosemary, cheese, olives, multigrain, etc.) at the beginning of each bake day for each dough. The dough gets put into bus tubs after it is mixed and given time to rise. Every hour the dough is given a strengthening fold until it is ready to be weighed and loafed. After loafing, the dough is given more time to rise before it gets scored and loaded into the oven. We generally were making between 150 and 200 loaves each bake day, which is sometimes overwhelming to see.

For pizza day, we would start around noon. We would have about an hour of prep, cutting vegetables, building and labeling pizza boxes, and weighing out dough for each pizza. We had five different varieties of pizza listed on the Cumberland farmer's market website and would generally take between five and ten extra pizzas to sell there. We would generally end up making thirty pizzas each Tuesday. Tuesday were always a welcome change of pace in the week and cooking pizzas in a live fire oven was always a thrill. At around four, we would load up my car and I would head to the Sewanee community center. The market lasts from four thirty until six and was always a fun place to see people. If we didn't sell all the extra pizzas, we would save them for lunch the next day or I might get to take one home.

Towards the end of my internship, I started to work the full schedule that Scott does almost daily. This consisted of waking up at 11 pm, building a fire in the oven, and then mixing the pre-ferments. This process generally took about three hours. At 6 am, we would wake up to rake the coals out in the oven and at around 7 am we would sweep out the oven. It would usually be close to 650 degrees at 7. Ginger is generally up at around six or so to cut and bag all the bread from the previous days bake so that she can get it into the Piggly Wiggly early that morning and then make deliveries in Monteagle and Sewanee before places open for lunch. They sell bread to a lot of restaurants including Stirling's, Julia's, IvyWild, Modern Dave's, and now Pearl's. It was really neat being able to see the bread I helped make Monday on a sandwich at Julia's on Tuesday night. I presume this is part of Scott's satisfaction with his job.

I think the biggest contribution I made to the bakery overall was giving Scott more time to keep the bakery in order. Right off the bat, he was able to make some changes in the equipment setup that he had wanted to do, but couldn't find the right time to do it. He was also able to try some new bread formulas with an extra hand around. We made

a sunflower seed bread that he hadn't made in a long time by the second week I was there, and we were able to continue making it regularly as my coworker and I could really work as efficiently as possible. We tried several new formulas like black bread, which is a rye bread with coffee in it that makes it especially dark. We started regularly making a caraway rye that we now sell to Modern Dave's weekly. We now make a kalamata olive bread that we sell to IvyWild and Pearl's. We started a levain, which is a French style sourdough culture, and we now make a garlic levain every week using that culture. This summer in particular I was able to see that my help let him expand his repertoire and accommodate more guaranteed restaurant orders that may have otherwise gone unpursued. I have no doubt that my help, and future interns help, give him the capacity to cement his bakery as a staple in the greater Monteagle area.

I doubt I'll ever be a baker, although I could find myself working in a bakery sometime again. What was great experience for me was working for someone whose main goal is to create the best final product possible by using the best practices in the art of bread baking. I believe this is crucial in any setting in order to be successful in ones work or life. It was very interesting to be aware of myself developing great habits and practices under Scott's guidance and sees that they transfer to other facets of my life as well. It was also really good to see the complete inner workings of a small business from A to Z. I participated in everything from Sysco orders to final delivery and compensation for the bread at the Piggly wiggly and restaurants. I even observed a little bit of the background items like taxes, permits, and inspections. I foresee that to be very beneficial no matter where I may end up in the future. I certainly did not expect to be so involved with the business, especially the background aspects.

On campus, I helped with a few different Sewanee farm projects. The biggest endeavor that our team as a whole undertook was revamping the Student Organic Garden. Gina, the new farm manager, has big plans for it and was the big spark in

making it a legitimate production area. She had Nate Wilson come till the entire space, which was an immense aesthetic change. We then helped mark and dig the raised beds on the same elevation over the course of the garden. We planted soybeans, which help fixate nitrogen into the soil and will enrich that soil for future student use. She is hoping to have the harvested edamame beans go to McClurg, Stirling's, or the culinary house. I also helped Dr. McGranahan with some forage sampling at the new Cheston Farm. With the samples, he is testing the production and nutrition of the burned area of the farm. I have been told that the outcome of the research will be presented by Sewanee students at a conference in 2013.

I can't say that I was at all displeased with my summer up on the mountain. As a matter of fact, it may have been the best summer I have had while working. I am hoping that nothing but good comes from the work I put in at the bakery as well as the work we put in as a team on campus. I look forward to seeing the progression of the organic garden and the Cheston farm.