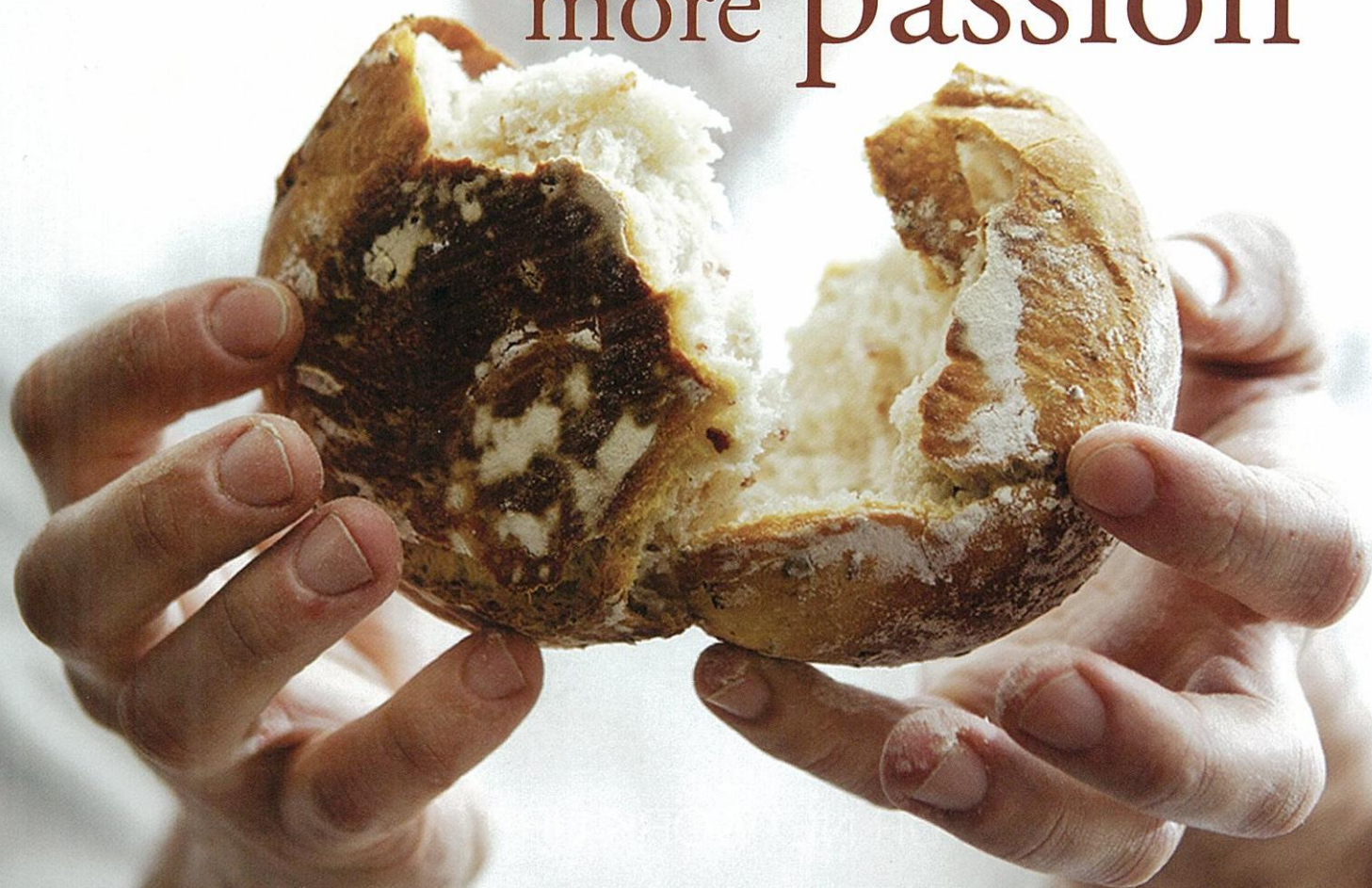


Less elbow grease, more passion



Mixers allow bakers to get creative. *Mischa Moselle* reports

The art of baking great bread lies in being able to feel the consistency of the dough.

The graft of baking great bread is in the mixing and kneading of large quantities of dough and then sizing it symmetrically. Dough mixers can take the sweat out of the mixing, leaving the baker to concentrate on the creativity.

What are the hallmarks of a good mixing machine?

Joshua Chu is General Manager and Executive Chef at Posto Pubblico, a New York-style Italian restaurant in Hong Kong that has gone from baking its own bread to setting up Commune, a wholesale supplier to other restaurants and retail outlets.

Mixing enough dough 600 loaves of bread and 200 burger buns, Chef Joshua tells *AHCT* that his team uses two mixers, one a 40-litre Hobart and the other a larger spiral mixer. He finds the spiral mixer in which the bowl of dough turns round a corkscrew mixes the dough perfectly.

The criteria used for buying both mixers was reliability. "You can't walk in at midnight and find your bread mixer not



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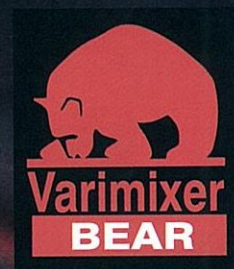
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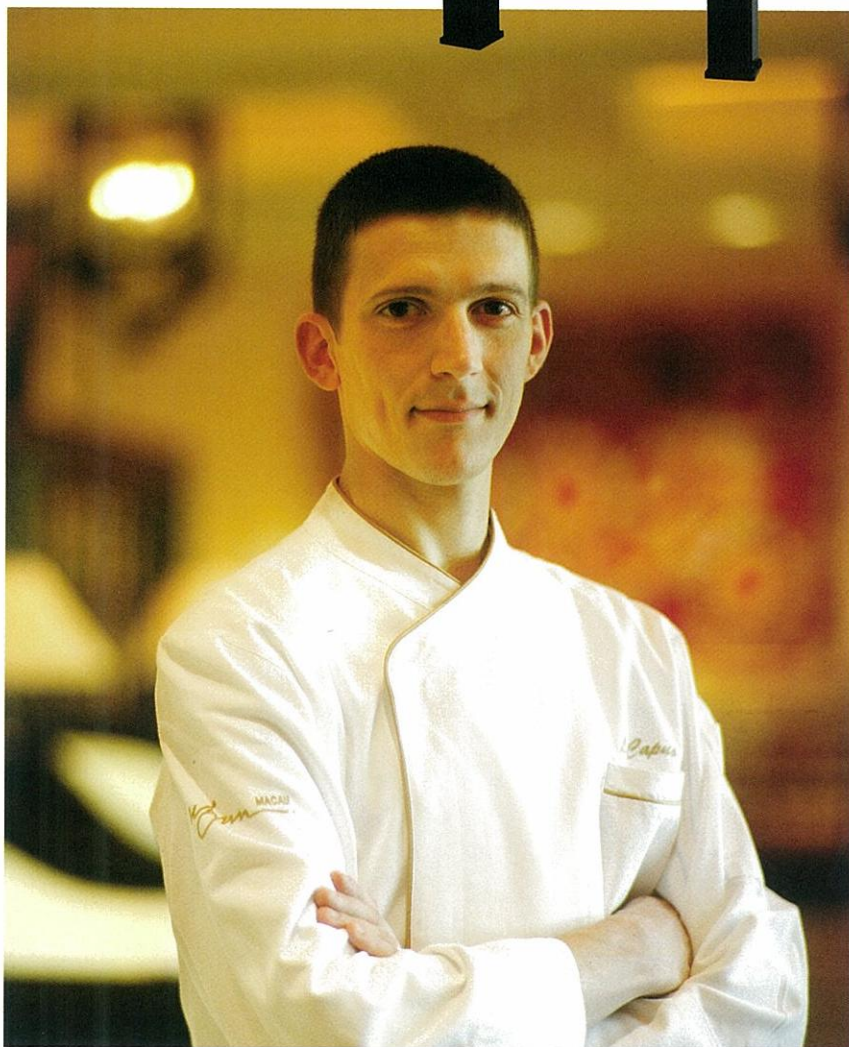
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A Bear Mixer and accessory



Wynn Macau Executive Pastry Chef Luc Capus

working,” says Chef Joshua.

The range of breads made for Posto Pubblico includes ciabatta, focaccia, semolina bread, traditional baguette, grissini, farmer’s loaf and rye bread.

Flours are organic and French or Italian and all loaves are hand-shaped.

Variety

Posto Pubblico Founding Partner and Chief Executive Officer Todd Darling tells *AHCT* that when the restaurant started some two years ago ciabatta was the only bread made. The bread was made in the restaurant kitchen at six in the morning and the only available space for proofing was the bar counter. Eventually so much

“It’s the first thing down on the table and it’s either ‘meh’ or ‘wow’”
Todd Darling

bread was being baked in the same four deck steam injected oven that the situation was unsustainable and the restaurant had to rent the upstairs premises to expand its bakery facilities.

Darling finds a lot of bread available in Hong Kong to be too soft and sweet and wanted to produce something better, believing that a great bread can be part of a memorable restaurant experience.

“It’s the first thing down on the table and it’s either ‘meh’ or ‘wow’. It sets the tone. I always remember the bread if it’s good.”

Another chef keen to provide his diners with good bread is French-born baker David Féau, Chef de Cuisine at The Royce at The Langham Huntington, Pasadena. Chef David trained with Guy Savoy and worked at Lutece in New York but he first got his hands into a bowl of bread dough at the tender age of 10.

“I bake my own bread because I have a deep passion for it which stems from me making my first loaf of bread when I was 10 years old. I took a class back then and I learned how to make country white bread. As a kid it was so satisfying to touch and feel the dough – to really work with it.



Hand-crafted loaves at Posto Pubblico

There's this delicate relationship between you and the dough. If you can't sense that relationship you will never be a good baker!" Chef David explains.

As with the team at Posto Pubblico who felt they couldn't get the bread they wanted from an external source, Chef Davis also likes to rely on his own bread rather than an outsiders.

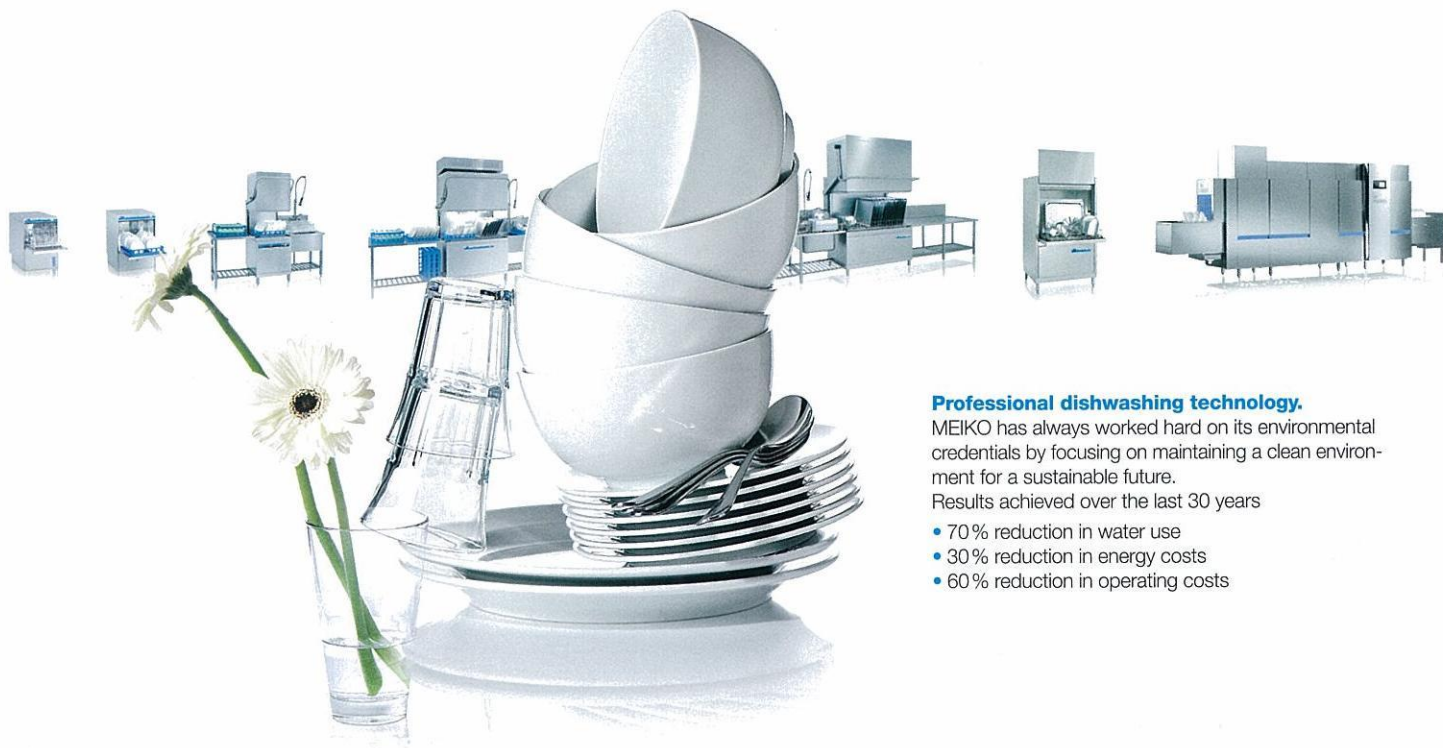
"I have more control over its consistency," he says, adding that it's cheaper too.

The Royce serves New American Cuisine and to match that the chef currently offers four types of bread – bacon bread with apple cider wine, Greek olive bread, rustic rye and pain noir, a black bread. The black bread has a very low gluten content and contains a lot of buckwheat, which makes it good for guests on special diets.

Chef David says that the bread offering changes seasonally but the guest reaction doesn't. "Guests love our bread."

All breads are made from scratch, mixed in a Hobart. "I want my mixer to

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The bread served should match the dish



The Royce Chef David Féau

have a perfect rotation and at least two speeds to activate the starch of the dough. A modern technique is to start slow to mix the ingredients then mix fast to develop the strength of the dough."

Chef David says it might be easier to buy in his own bread but he doesn't because "It wouldn't be my own."

It helps the restaurant stand out simply because, "Most restaurants don't offer homemade bread from the chef."

At the Wynn Macau, Executive Pastry Chef Luc Capus is less sure that a homemade bread will help a restaurant or hotel stand out from the crowd but is certain that it is worth doing.

Match the menu

The bread is part of a restaurant menu and must match the dishes. It is also one of the first items a guest will notice in a restaurant. Chef Luc believes that bread served at the start of a meal should be like an amuse-bouche, with a strong flavour and texture – Wynn Macau serves Parmesan bread and focaccia with olives. Later on in the meal the bread should be plainer and good for dipping in a sauce if necessary.

Many guests at Wynn Macau are from mainland China and more used to eating steamed rice with a meal than bread.

"For this kind of guest, I want to provide a good quality bread but not one with a complicated taste. The bread can be plain but must be of high quality," Chef Luc says.

With a large number of restaurants and 1,000 rooms to bake for, volumes are large and the hotel bakes three times a day. Breads on offer change approximately every three or four months.

Using a mixer to blend and knead the dough "takes the non-skilled part out of the equation. Checking the quality needs skills," says the chef.

One of the market leaders in mixing machines is the Bear range from Danish company Wodschow. They have recently redesigned some elements of the mixer.

According to the company, "Improvements particularly worth a mention include the more distinctive design of the panel, which has been given a rubber seal, and a front which matches the stainless steel elements of the mixer, where improved ergonomics and an easier-to-clean surface have also been incorporated into both the VL-1 and the VL-1S models.

"The previous buttons on the panel have now been replaced by recessed buttons for safer, easier operation as well as improved hygiene.

"Featuring automatic speed control and bowl lowering via the front panel, the VL-1S model requires less free space, as the machine is operated from the front only. The VL-1 model retains its familiar levers on the side. The new design also features a new, digital timer as a replacement for the old "egg timer". The new electronic timer means 100 percent accuracy."

For Chef Luc the point of using any mixing machine is that there are many steps involved in baking and the machine takes out the dull ones allowing bakers to "put more passion into the bread." **AHCT**