

## BAKING

## Two Missing Ingredients?

This issue of CFW is about baking ingredients. To be consistent, I would like to propose the addition of two ingredients that will significantly improve the industry. Actually, these missing ingredients could save our industry, for surely, the lack of their incorporation will cripple us. That is a wild claim, but I believe it.

Youth is the first missing ingredient. There are too many meetings I attend, too many bakeries I visit, and too many suppliers that I meet in which my overall impression is that 70–90% of the people in this business could retire in the next 1–7 years. Are we doing a good job of moving the next generation along so they can take up the effort when the present group is ready to leave? When I look around, I wonder if we have enough young people coming on board.



**BERNARD BRUINSMA**

Innovative Cereal Systems

Wilsonville, OR

How healthy is the baking industry if it cannot attract young people to take it up as a profession? There could be a multitude of reasons for this lack of youthful influx into baking, but let me just mention a few possibilities. *Wages.* Baking was a better place to find above average wages than it is today. We have lost ground. *Work week.* Many young people I talk with complain bitterly about split days off. If they support a family, it is difficult to attend T-ball games, soccer games, ballet lessons,

or Sunday church services. This is a serious issue that should not be dismissed out of hand. *Mentorship.* Gone is the tradition of taking someone along, showing them the ropes, explaining how to best perform a job, and then giving them the responsibility to perform the job. *Unwillingness to relocate.* When we do have good young people, many times we request that they relocate to another area where they could serve the company in an even greater capacity. If someone chooses to not accept this transfer once or twice, he/she is set aside from further promotions and will eventually leave the company or the industry. Some people like where they live, the schools the kids attend, and the stores they shop in!

The second missing ingredient is research. If we do not do research, we lose our edge as an industry. We are a small part of the food industry. In general, the food industry is a high-volume production with relatively low margins. But that is no excuse for not investing in good research.

Research is the vital fluid that keeps the bakery machine alive. Without innovation, we will go stale and eventually be relegated to the buggy whip pile of the food industry. Without real research, we will not find the reason why some things work and others do not. I believe we lost a monumental opportunity by not learning the exact mechanism of potassium bromate in a dough system, because if we knew how it worked, it would be a lot easier to find something that could replace that action.

I am a bit disheartened by the relatively small research groups at some of our major bakery groups. The R&D centers are staffed with excellent, highly-trained individuals, but the size of some groups just does not meet critical mass. I believe that line extension does not meet the criteria of research. Making a blueberry-filled muffin to add to a line that already contains a strawberry and raspberry flavor may make economic sense, but it is not the kind of work that leads to breakthrough products. Most new products fail. That is a fact, but being so conservative that we work only on line extensions will stifle new product creativity—and puts us at risk of losing the consumer.

On my office wall, I have a quotation by W. F. Geddes that reminds me daily of what my priorities should be:

In closing I cannot more aptly express the relation of our Association to the cereal industries than by quoting from an address by Mr. James Ford Bell, Chairman, Board of Directors, General Mills, Inc., before the Northwest Section on March 31st last.

“Scientific research is industry’s secret of perpetual youth. Without the constant infusion of new ideas from the laboratory and the testing plant, industry grows old, and progressively loses its vitality, until it is finally laid away as a useless relic of the past. It is industry’s business to make and sell, but it is the business of science to teach industry what to make, and how to make its products better. It is to the scientists that the flour and cereal milling industry looks, and must look, for its chief guidance in the future if it is to hold and strengthen its position as one of the great servants of mankind.”

Though Geddes was speaking in 1939, these words are as true today as they were then.