



Change in one of the world's oldest industries

By Michael Sherlock
Former CEO of Brumby's Bakeries and co-author of *Jumpshift!*

I recently attended the IBA 2012 International Baking Trade Fair held every three years in Munich.

There were 1200 exhibitors from 59 countries, from start-ups to market leaders presenting their bakery, pastry and cake products, machinery and innovative technologies. This is the tenth overseas such trade fair I have attended.

Initially I thought there would be much new material and the trade show would just be a rehash of familiar offerings. With this in mind my plan was to catch up with some old contacts and enjoy the event without the expectation of being the chief executive officer of a bakery franchise.

How wrong was that thinking! I returned to Australia with a bag full of ideas and innovations I previously thought impossible. Improvement is never finished just because you are vastly experienced in your field. I continually learn to never to close my mind as every day brings new fresh opportunities.

The most outstanding example of innovative products was a German bread company's response to consumers desire to reduce their carbohydrate intake ('fit overnight', low-carb/ 'low-GI' bread). They claim their bread helps consumers to reduce weight and help with fitness overnight while they slept. This bread was crusty and very tasty. It was also claimed the bread had a GI content equal to broccoli, contained five times the greater percentage of protein than conventional bread and conversely a six-times lower proportion of carbohydrates – steak in the form of bread.

Another manufacturer claimed to have

invented bread that, if eaten over a six month period, was scientifically proven to reduce your cholesterol. Who would have thought bread could make these health and lifestyle claims?

There were also innovations in long established sandwich preparation and display methods. A French company has developed a process where the sandwich fillings are displayed separately from the bread and consumers select their fillings and bread at the point of sale position, after which a machine puts the selected contents and bread together in front of you. Customers can see the fillings and enjoy warm fresh crusty bread without a six minute wait.

An Austrian company has developed a range of breads called 'Eat The Ball' in which bread rolls are baked as exact replicas of various footballs, basketballs and even hockey pucks. This was claimed to be the bread roll of the next generation.

Another idea was a bread app for mobile phone called 'BreadSeeker' which displays the nearest bakeries and cafés in your area anywhere in the world for your favourite bread products.

In exploring new ways of baking bread, a Swedish company has developed an oven that reduces baking time by 30 per cent so the final product is fresher, doubles its shelf life and has a better taste, aroma and appearance. The bread is removed 70 per cent through the baking process and finishes

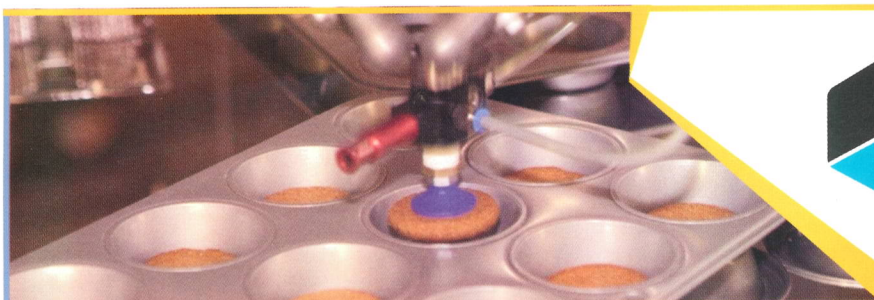
baking during a vacuum cooling process. This cooling time is reduced from 40 minutes to two minutes, thereby substantially reducing energy costs, floor space required and having product immediately available for distribution.

Increasingly I see strong evidence of the need for all professions including bakers and pastry cooks to change, adapt and innovate to remain relevant by addressing social issues such as reducing energy requirements, reducing wastage and designing products that help overcome their product's weaknesses. Also the evidence points to the need to use social media in all sorts of different and creative ways to help promote products and services to the consumers of the world.

Even in the second oldest industry in the world (baking) we can see evidence of innovation to meet consumer needs and to combat fashion (and dietary) trends that might have been viewed traditionally as harmful to the bottom line of your products or services.

With this in mind, I'm looking forward to attending the IBA Trade Fair in three years time to see what further innovations have been developed.

What are the changes you can use to give your business the edge? Get in the helicopter to anticipate your customers needs, research what is out there and align your business plan with these needs and innovations to make you strong and relevant in the years ahead. ■



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