

# OVERVIEW

NORTH AMERICA <sup>2025</sup>

## IBIE Interview

Eric Dell, American  
Bakers Association  
President & CEO

## Sustainability

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## Snacking Trends

Flavors to Watch





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# IBIE, Where the Networking Is Unmatched

*Georgiana Ilic*

**H**ow do you make the most of an event attended by 20,000 people? It seems - and it is - overwhelming. But it doesn't have to be if you make some well-informed plans beforehand. That is what guided us in putting together this North America Overview edition. With IBIE at the center of everyone's plans this year, we wanted to make sure you, our reader, are best equipped to make the best decisions for you and your business when you set foot in the great halls of the Las Vegas Convention Center.

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With IBIE at the center of everyone's plans this year, we wanted to make sure you, our reader, are best equipped to make the best decisions for you and your business when you set foot in the great halls of the Las Vegas Convention Center.

We wrote about what to expect from the trade show, but even more specifically from the IBIEducate program, one of the most exciting features of the event. We interviewed Eric Dell, President and CEO of American Bakers Association, on his organization's efforts to advance the agenda of the baking industry in the US. We curated a list of significant launches that can help you improve your processes and your business. And we even made a guide for first-time attendees, so they know how to make the most out of what IBIE has to offer.

These words by Eric Dell stuck to memory because they remind us that a trade show is about business and numbers, but even before that is about people. At IBIE, “the networking is unmatched. Meeting new people and reconnecting with long-time industry peers adds real value to the IBIE experience. What makes it even more powerful is the diversity of attendees from foodservice to frozen foods, co-manufacturing, and all aspects of commercial baking. If your bakery is looking to enter new distribution channels or build strategic partnerships, IBIE is the place where those doors open.”

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# High Expectations at The Baking Expo

At IBIE 2025, the International Baking Industry Exposition held September 13-17, 2025, in Las Vegas, participants can expect a vast and dynamic event focusing on innovation, education, and networking in the baking industry. The event will feature over 850 exhibitors showcasing cutting-edge baking technology, automation, ingredients, packaging, and production equipment, covering nearly 10 acres of expo halls. Specialized pavilions such as the Snack Food Pavilion and the Pet Food Pavilion will offer targeted exploration areas.

**I**BIE 2025 includes IBIEducate, a comprehensive educational program with more than 250 sessions and live demonstrations addressing industry challenges, operational optimization, product innovation, and regulatory changes. IBIEducate will be included in the registration fee and will offer sessions in 64 languages using AI translation to broaden accessibility, including an increased presence of Spanish-language content.

The program is organized into specialized tracks addressing key and emerging topics. Business & Strategy covers business management, sales and marketing strategies, and operational efficiency. Workforce & Professional Growth focuses on workforce attraction, retention, and professional development. Technology & Innovation includes sessions on artificial

intelligence, automation, robotics, digital manufacturing, and cybersecurity. Baking & Pastry offers cake and cookie decorating, pastry techniques, demos, and hands-on workshops. Food Science & Product Development addresses trends in food science, product development, formulation, and baking innovations. Quality & Sustainability covers sustainability practices, environmental impact, food safety, and quality assurance.

The content is carefully designed to be relevant and actionable for participants at every level and job function within the baking industry. Sessions aim to address current industry challenges such as workforce development, supply chain and operational efficiencies, energy savings, regulatory compliance, and consumer-driven product innovation.

IBIEducate also features live demonstrations and interactive workshops to complement the educational talks, providing a hands-on learning experience.

The expo will host exciting competitions like the Creative Cake Decorating Competition, World Bread Awards USA, the debut of the Panettone World Cup (with participants from across the Western Hemisphere vying to advance to a global final in Italy), and the Americas Selection of the Coupe du Monde de la Boulangerie, where international baking teams compete in categories such as baguettes, viennoiserie, artistic bread, and savory baking.

Networking and social events like the Rockin' Pint 80s music night will provide informal opportunities to connect. The International Trade Center within the expo will facilitate global business opportunities with translation services and meeting spaces for international delegations.

Overall, IBIE 2025 promises to be a world-class gathering of baking industry professionals to discover the latest innovations, receive high-level education, engage in competitions, and form profitable partnerships aimed at advancing the baking business in a rapidly evolving marketplace. •

## HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF IBIE AS A VISITOR

If you're heading to IBIE, you're in for a packed few days of inspiration, innovation and connection. But let's be honest - with more than 850 exhibitors, countless sessions and thousands of attendees, it can be easy to feel like you're just along for the ride.

Here's how to make sure you walk away with real value - not just a bag full of brochures and sore feet.

### 1. Set Your Goals

Before the show even begins, decide what success looks like for you. Are you hunting for new suppliers? Looking to upgrade your tech stack? Seeking educational insights or new international contacts? Define your priorities – they'll help you make better decisions once you're on the floor.

### 2. Plan Your Schedule

A bit of prep goes a long way. Use the IBIE app or website to map out your must-see exhibitors, register for education sessions and workshops and build a day-by-day agenda that's realistic.

### 3. Explore the Innovation Hotspots

The show is more than machinery. Make time

to visit the IBIE Innovation Showcase – a window into fresh product launches, the Baking Industry Trends Theatre – for curated talks on where the industry's headed, and the Startup Pavilion – where the next big thing might be baking.

### 4. Network Intentionally

IBIE is a global crossroads for baking professionals. Take advantage of networking lounges, happy hours, and even the matchmaking features in the app. Whether you're looking for partners, suppliers or peers, now's the time to meet face-to-face.

### 5. Look Beyond the Machines

Yes, equipment is a major draw – but don't overlook adjacent trends in: packaging and shelf life, ingredient formulation and clean label strategies, sustainability and waste reduction, data, software and process intelligence

### 6. Wear Comfortable Shoes!

You'll likely walk several kilometres a day. Dress smart, stay hydrated, and give yourself breathing room between sessions. A few minutes of quiet can help you process what you're seeing - and stay sharp.



Eric Dell, ABA CEO:

**“IBIE 2025 Is about Equipping Every Participant with the Tools and Insights to Thrive”**

Eric Dell joined the American Bakers Association as President and CEO in January 2023. He leads the trade group's sweeping mission of promoting and growing the baking industry in partnership with its 300+ members. In preparation for the first International Baking Industry Exposition (IBIE) of his tenure, we asked him how he and ABA see the industry and what has changed since he took over.

By Jo Ilie

**You became the CEO of American Bakers Association almost three years ago, taking charge of the most significant voice of the baking industry in the US. What were your objectives back then and how do you evaluate the progress you made toward them?**

When I joined the American Bakers Association (ABA), one of my first priorities was to develop a strategic roadmap that would advance our association and position the entire commercial baking industry for long-term growth and resilience. To do that effectively, we embarked on a thorough, collaborative planning process, listening to our members, visiting companies across the country, and engaging deeply with our board and leadership to identify the most pressing challenges and promising opportunities. Our top priority throughout this process was to listen to our members and focus on building for the industry's success.

That work culminated in the launch of ABA's strategic plan, which was built around three key pillars: Destination Workplace, Category Growth, and Higher-Level Impact. Each pillar reflects our commitment to the people and businesses that make this industry thrive.

Over the past three years, I'm proud to say we've made meaningful and measurable progress. We've amplified efforts to make baking a career destination, advocated for workforce-supportive policies, and forged partnerships with educational and veteran organizations. On the category growth front, we've highlighted our members' incredible community impact and explored ways to expand product reach and food access to all communities. Perhaps most importantly, we've worked to elevate ABA's impact as the leading industry voice. Our advocacy has grown stronger, events and research more valuable, and internal culture and core values directly aligned with the values of the commercial baking industry.

**What do you think are the most stringent challenges of the industry in 2025 in the US? What does ABA do, advocacy-wise, to address them?**

In 2025, ABA continues to focus on strengthening advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C. and in states across the country, ensuring that the voice of the commercial baking industry is heard on the issues that matter most to our members. We're actively engaging with the Administration, Congress, and key state-level stakeholders to advance policies that support growth, drive innovation, and protect our ability to feed communities nationwide. From food and workplace safety, to nutrition, tax, trade and workforce, ABA is focused on building bipartisan support and keeping the industry's priorities front and center in today's fast-moving and unpredictable policy environment.

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Our advocacy has grown stronger, events and research more valuable, and internal culture and core values directly aligned with the values of the commercial baking industry.

**What kind of support can bakers get from ABA? How do you adapt your support to the new challenges?**

ABA champions the baking industry and equips our bakers and allied members with the tools, advocacy, and insights they need to succeed and grow. We provide robust support across three core areas: workforce development, category growth, and driving collective industry impact. Our advocacy leadership ensures the voice of commercial baking is heard at every level of government, with members regularly engaging policymakers in Washington, D.C. and in state capitols, to shape business-critical policies. We invest in career development through exclusive training, workforce resources, and programs like NextGenBaker to build a strong talent pipeline.

We help our members navigate evolving challenges, from workforce shifts to changing consumer demands, we adapt through forward-looking research, professional events, and data-driven insights. Our events and specialized meetings foster collaboration and spark innovation, while our member-only research helps companies make strategic decisions. Everything we do is designed to position the commercial baking industry for a sustainable and successful future.

**At iba 2025, in Düsseldorf, you talked about the extensive research ABA does within the baking community in the US to identify up-and-coming trends and opportunities and thus help bakers run their business better. What are the most relevant insights you can share about the current state of the industry and where people find new business niches?**

ABA's member-only research provides baking-specific insights into consumer trends, behaviors, and the industry's economic impact. From benchmarking talent development strategies to highlighting the baking sector's support of nearly 800,000 American jobs, ABA equips bakery and supplier businesses with the data they need to make informed decisions, drive innovation, and fuel growth. As part of ABA's strategic plan around higher-level impact, we recently created our Bakery Playbook research. This category specific, member-only resource analyzes custom consumer data to help bakers and suppliers grow their business. This includes a deep dive into categories such as cookies, crackers, buns, bread, and more.

**What do you think will be the next big challenges for bakers and how do you think they can prepare for them?**

The next wave of challenges for bakers will stem from the continued pace of change, particularly in government regulation, consumer expectations, workforce dynamics, supply chain stability, and technology integration. Since our last IBIE, we've seen how quickly the landscape can shift, and that pace isn't slowing down. Bakers will need to stay agile and forward-thinking to remain competitive.

That's why events like IBIE 2025 are so important. It's not just about discovering the latest equipment or ingredients; it's about setting strategic goals, attending sessions on automation and resilience, and engaging directly with the industry for long-term growth.

**This year's IBIE in Las Vegas will be your first as CEO of ABA. How do you see ABA's role in making the trade show a successful event for the industry?**

We're excited to welcome the global baking industry to IBIE this September. This is more than just a trade show, it's the premier forum for innovation, where the brightest minds in baking come

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**What truly sets IBIE apart is our world-class education program. (...) ABA will specifically provide education sessions on the current advocacy landscape on issues at both the federal and state levels that impact the commercial baking industry.**

together to shape the future of our industry. From hands-on experiences to thought-provoking discussions and invaluable networking opportunities, IBIE provides the ideal environment for driving progress, building new partnerships, and inspiring the next generation of baking leaders. ABA will offer education sessions that support the needs of our members, including workforce trends, consumer research, insights on evolving legislative concerns, and more. Each session pairs actionable data with live Q&A, so industry professionals leave with the latest insights on legislation, technology, talent, and market dynamics. For more information on ABA at IBIE, you can visit <https://www.americanbakers.org/events/ibie>

**What will you offer to the participants this year? And what are your favorite highlights from the program?**

What truly sets IBIE apart is our world-class education program. This year, we're offering sessions that dive into some of the most important trends, like global and flavor innovation, clean label and allergen-friendly baking, and functional ingredients that support health-conscious and specialty diets. ABA will specifically provide education sessions on the current advocacy landscape on issues at both the federal and state levels that impact the commercial baking industry. Whether you're a first-time attendee or an industry veteran, IBIE 2025 is about equipping every participant with the tools and insights to thrive in today's rapidly evolving market.

**What are three aspects that would encourage visitors to attend this edition of IBIE?**

First are the IBIEducate learning sessions. These sessions are laser-focused on the baking industry and always leave you with something new from a fresh idea, a valuable contact, or a practical application of technology. It's an unparalleled opportunity to deepen your understanding of emerging trends and walk away with insights you can apply immediately.

Second, I'm excited about the innovations on display. It inspires me to see how manufacturers are reimagining long-standing equipment to make it easier to operate, clean, or maintain. That kind of thoughtful engineering signals a bright future for our manufacturing environment and workforce.

Lastly, the networking is unmatched. Meeting new people and reconnecting with long-time industry peers adds real value to the IBIE experience. What makes it even more powerful is the diversity of attendees from foodservice to frozen foods, co-manufacturing, and all aspects of commercial baking. If your bakery is looking to enter new distribution channels or build strategic partnerships, IBIE is the place where those doors open. •



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# Innovation Takes Center Stage at IBIE

Major technology, ingredient, and baked goods companies reunite under the IBIE flags this September to launch a series of exciting new products aimed at making the industry better and the customers happier.

## ABM EQUIPMENT

Eagle PI, the company that first brought X-ray to food and pioneered X-ray item count, checkweighing, package dud detection, fat analysis and dual energy, has once again doubled industry capabilities with photon-counting technology. ABM Equipment, their primary distributor, is applying this technology to baking applications and providing retrofits for legacy machines.

## AGRIFLEX

Agriflex product cooling machinery uses an innovative technology, patented by Agriflex, that decreases the dough's final temperature by as much as 20°C/68°F, ensuring a constant and homogeneous temperature through self-regulation.

## AIR MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGIES

AMT's latest system integrates advanced Clean Room Technologies (CRTech) to precisely manage temperature, moisture, particulates and pressurization — ensuring safer, more consistent products. With intelligent control, real-time monitoring and comprehensive reporting, CRTech elevates quality and supports food safety in exposed cooling zones, delivering exceptional product quality for exceptional bakers.

## CAIN FOOD INDUSTRIES, INC.

N'Hance RS is an enzymatic conditioning system developed to replace sugar in breads, rolls and high-sugar doughs. N'Hance RS creates simple sugars from the starch in baked goods, allowing the

baker to reduce bulk sugar. In high-sugar doughs, the reduction in sugar can improve mix time, reduce the tackiness of the dough and reduce yeast use.

## CH BABB

BABBCO introduces its latest high performance Clean Bake tunnel oven. The all electric high temperature tunnel oven with radiant and convective heat provides superior dynamic performance while eliminating carbon emissions. The oven can include air tubulation (convection), multiple hearth types, full height oven access doors and stainless steel interior, washdown construction.

## DAWN FOODS

Made with Dawn's trusted quality and premium ingredients and based on



the popular, trending flavor on menus everywhere, Dawn's Exceptional Churro Donut Mix (3084625) provides a unique, elevated eating experience for donut customers. With its crisp outer bite and light, chewy interior, this donut eats like a combination of a cake donut and churro.

### DOUGH TECH

Water meters designed to ensure automatic and precise dosing of water while simultaneously regulating temperature. Designed to meet the needs of the most demanding bakery, they combine advanced technology, an intuitive interface and high performance.

### EAGLESTONE

Made in the USA, the 1411 Series Modular Plastic Constant Turn Conveyor features a zero-tangent, center-driven design that enables true curved paths without straight sections. It maintains product orientation through tight turns, supports high-speed performance, and maximizes layout flexibility and space efficiency across various applications.

### FOODTOOLS

An advanced ultrasonic slicing machine that features a single product platform with a servo-driven blade, enabling precise cutting of sheet and round products into various portion sizes and patterns. The system includes programmable recipe storage and an optional blade cleaning unit for sticky products. Designed for efficiency, it also offers built-in storage for customized holders, enhancing both performance and convenience.

### FORMOST FUJI

Constructed from high-quality materials, the HFFS flow wrapper is built to withstand the demands of daily use, ensuring longevity and consistent performance. It offers superior technology in seal quality, speed and flexibility while being easy to operate and maintain.

### FRED D. PFENING CO.

The Pfening K3 liquid meter controller offers a cost-effective solution for accurate control of water and liquid ingredient meters and pumps. Built on an Allen-Bradley micro PLC platform, operator control is simple from the integral touch screen and panel push buttons for weight set points and START/STOP functions. The Model K3 Controller features rate and totalizing functions and is ideal to use with Pfening models Mark IH, IIH, VH and many other brands of meters.

### INTRALOX

Intralox's ZeroSplice Technology revolutionizes belt installation by eliminating the need for field splicing. The ThermoLace Heavy-Duty Edge allows plant personnel to connect ThermoDrive belts quickly and easily. This innovation reduces downtime, simplifies maintenance and removes reliance on third-party services. ZeroSplice is compatible with all ThermoDrive drive styles, profiles and accessories, making it a versatile and efficient solution for food processing environments.

### IPCO

Effortless Chocolate Production: The Automated Rotoform Depositor | West Hall — 1311

IPCO is pleased to offer the Automatic Height and Angle Adjustment for the Rotoform Depositor.

This upgrade seamlessly integrates into existing Rotoform systems, allowing bakers to automate the height and angle settings for different recipes, eliminating manual adjustments. By storing these settings in the HMI, adjustments are applied automatically when a recipe is selected. This ensures process consistency, reduces the risk of human error and improves operational efficiency.

**LESAFFRE**

Saf Pro Accent Fortification CaD2 Plus adds nutrition and value to a variety of baked goods — from sourdough and multigrain bread to bagels, buns and rolls — for consumers in search of calcium- and vitamin D-enriched products, without impacting the taste or aroma of finished products.

**MESSER GASSES FOR LIFE**

Temperature management with the cryogenic solution Messer KwikChiller. This compact nitrogen system, designed for continuous in-line cooling or freezing, is the newest innovation in their portfolio of food processing technologies. Whether used independently or as a “cryo-assist” technology, the KwikChiller’s variable cooling rate allows for temperature management of delicate or texture-sensitive products while boosting throughput.

**MIT SYSTEMS**

M Cloud ERP represents an innovative new cloud-native ERP platform designed to specifically meet the expansive and complex business requirements of the baking industry yet is easy to use, maintain and operate. With M Cloud ERP, companies are realizing greater levels of efficiency and productivity in Sales & Distribution, Financials, Production and Warehouse Management by automating their manual processes and streamlining operations with the use of advanced technology including AI.

**MULTIVAC**

The Progressa Pastry line from Fritsch sets a new benchmark in hygienic design and operational efficiency for retail pastry production. Engineered for superior cleanability, the system features smooth surfaces, rounded corners and watertight covers. Quick-access belt mechanisms, ergonomic innovations and tool-free component removal

ensure faster changeovers and reduce downtime. Progressa Pastry delivers a practical, production-ready solution for bakeries prioritizing food safety, efficiency and consistent quality.

**PANORAMIC – A DIVISION OF ANCHOR PACKAGING**

No-Tip Cupcake Containers keep cupcakes flawless - from freezer to shelf to home. The patented design locks cupcakes in place to prevent frosting damage during transit or display. With Flex Safe freeze-to-fresh durability and a full-perimeter seal that doubles shelf life, bakers can maximize sell-through.

**PATCO PRODUCTS**

PATCO’s advanced emulsification technologies significantly enhance product stability, texture and overall performance, providing customized solutions. Through the integration of comprehensive research and sustainable sourcing practices, PATCO is strategically positioned to assist clients in minimizing the effects of recent tariffs, supported by two production facilities based in the United States.

**PURATOS**

The Puratos Industrial Pilot Bakery powered by AMF revolutionizes the way bakers innovate because it allows them to go from ideation to production-quality samples in just one visit. This first-of-its-kind collaboration between Puratos and AMF Bakery Systems brings together world-class technical expertise and cutting-edge automation. Bakers can test new products without stopping their own lines, saving time and costs, while leveraging consumer insights and sensory expertise to ensure market success.

**RADEMAKER**

Rademaker will introduce their latest Pizza Topping Line, designed for fully automated pizza production. A key highlight is the

new Pizza Sauce Depositor, making its debut in the North American market. The line also includes the Pizza Strewing System, capable of handling all types of topping materials, such as cheese, vegetables, IQFs, and meats. The new Radini Bread Line will make its introduction in the North-American market. The line enables bakeries to process between 250 and 1,200 kg of bread dough per hour, accommodating a wide variety of dough types.

**REGAL REXNORD**

The Rexnord 6400 Series Kleantop Active Drive Spiral Cage Belt leverages years of industry experience to deliver a 20-25% increase in productivity. The conveyor belt positively engages the spiral drum at a low tension and maintains it for reduced risk of tension spikes, premature belt failure or repairs. The 6400AD belt is designed with patented PowerKey technology for quick and easy disassemble, repair and re-assemble.

**ST. JOHNS PACKAGING**

This soft touch matte film offers a premium matte finish without the need for printing varnishes, which can increase costs and hinder recycling. The premium soft touch is achieved by using special resin blends in a multilayer blown film extrusion process.

**VAN DER GRAAF**

VDG’s new all-stainless steel SSV-XP Drum Motor features an exchangeable profiled sleeve. The belt profile is precisely machined directly onto the stainless-steel drive sleeve (XP), which can be easily removed and exchanged for another profiled sleeve to match the belt required on the conveyor — without changing the drum motor. This allows processors to use the same drum motor when switching belts for different types of food processing. •



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ET FRESH



# Paris Baguette: a French-inspired, South Korean-born, North American Success Story

An interview with *Paris Baguette North America Chief Development Officer Nick Scaccio* about the brand's successful business franchise model, product innovation and scaling up strategy.

By Sharmila Rajah



**T**here's a race at Paris Baguette North America to power cities and provinces across the United States (U.S.) and Canada with their presence — the quintessential neighborhood bakery cafe.

Paris Baguette — which debuted in the U.S. in 2005 and rolled out its first franchised unit ten years later — has turned in remarkable performances. At the close of the second quarter of 2025, Paris Baguette had opened 225 stores in North America, with a goal of reaching 1000 U.S. cafes and 100 Canadian locations by 2030.

So far this year, there have been 135 new franchise signings, 42 lease signings, and 34 new cafés opened. The first quarter of 2025 marked the company's 17th consecutive quarter of positive growth. Paris Baguette North America is targeting new markets such as Connecticut, Missouri, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Indiana, Idaho, Delaware, and Puerto Rico. To support its expansion plans and reinforce the company's supply chain, the company is set to break ground this summer on its 260,000-square-foot state-of-the-art bakery manufacturing plant in Texas — the franchise's first production site in North America. In May this year, the brand reached one million reward scheme members in the U.S. — a milestone that reflects growing brand loyalty.

Spearheading the brand's ambitious growth programme is newly promoted Chief Development Officer Nick Scaccio. Scaccio joined Paris Baguette North America in 2020 in a strategy capacity, working closely with innovation and research and development (R&D) teams, and later transitioned to operations for several years, culminating with his role as Chief Operating Officer. Now, Scaccio oversees growth, construction, real estate, and franchise sales groups.

### **What has been the core focus and positioning for Paris Baguette North America?**

We maintain a great sense of pride in our mission, vision and brand values, which are spreading joy, rising to the occasion, having heart, and nourishing the community. These are at the forefront of our expansion. We are actively looking to reestablish the neighborhood bakery cafe as the heart of the community around the world. And that vision is at the core of what we are doing now.

### **What has been driving the success of Paris Baguette in North America?**

It always starts with the people — the right leadership team. Beginning with the incredible vision of our CEO, Darren Tipton, who has brought a wealth of experience to set a path forward for our organization. Our leadership team has been together for several years now across each of our departments. I believe everyone on our leadership team brings something special to the table in terms of their vision and disciplines from marketing, supply chain, operations and development, to human resources, and IT. This year, we will close over 250 new deals and open around 100 cafes. It's an incredibly exciting time for Paris Baguette in our journey in the U.S. and Canada.

### **What are the components at play to enable such substantial expansion plans?**

The people on all verticals within the franchise organization — our team members, our leadership team, our franchise operators,

the owners in the field — who enable this. It's all about the right people who share the same vision and who can execute with the same momentum to bring this brand to life in so many cities, states and provinces across North America.

Product quality and the overall product line are a daily and consistent focus of ours. Innovation is a big part of our brand DNA. We have quarterly updates, seasonal LTOs, and over 13 different cake holidays that we celebrate with new, innovative cakes. Our croissants are hugely popular, and so is our strawberry soft cream cake. Cakes — made by our bakers on-site every day — are a big part of our business. Our donut line, with assorted toppings, flavours, varieties and fillings, does unbelievably well.

From there, it's a matter of executing from a design perspective — our cafes have a very specific look and feel. We recently implemented new design elements, from our penny-tiled floors to our cake rooms, which are guest-facing. Guests can now watch our expert bakers craft cakes in beautiful cake rooms with expansive windows. Families and kids can partake in the action — it almost feels experiential. There are also these beautiful center islands, the centerpieces of our cafes, where guests can peruse our products from a 360-degree perspective. It's been termed the Disneyland of bakeries. Guest experience is extremely important to us.

### **How, as a global brand that started predominantly in Asian-based markets, have you successfully broken into the mainstream market in North America?**

It's an interesting history that has culminated in explosive growth. We are French-inspired, South Korean-born and rapidly expanding in North America. It's an incredible story of evolution. The brand has gone from focusing specifically and predominantly on Asian-centric markets and products to opening up our horizons to extend to all markets and having a comprehensive product line. We have done so by partnering with Lavazza for our coffee program, and by becoming incredibly inclusive as a brand, which has opened up our opportunities in various cities and states in the U.S. and many provinces across Canada.

### **How important is product innovation for Paris Baguette to stay relevant and to meet and adapt to evolving taste preferences in the different markets across North America?**

The North American arm of our organization operates in the U.S., Canada and out to Hawaii. We will be in Guam and Puerto Rico over the next year and a half. Our menu needs to be eclectic for sure — we're always considering what our guests' desires are. We have our staple core items like our croissants and our pain aux raisins, and more specialty items such as our mochi donuts, strawberry



lemon croissants and whole red bean bread. How eclectic our menu speaks to how inclusive and diverse a brand we are.

And on the innovation side, we are quick to innovate. We have quite a bit happening in the R&D phase in terms of new categories. Croissant innovation has been top of mind. We recently also launched a Dubai chocolate line, which is extremely popular in the market. Our marketing and innovation teams identified that, and it is out in cafes now.

### **Paris Baguette has what seems like a successful franchise model. However, how do you tackle the challenges that come with this rate of expansion?**

I consistently share with my team that our business is different today than it was yesterday and will be different tomorrow. So we are constantly reviewing processes, systems, and platforms that we had in place yesterday to see if they will work tomorrow to help catapult, support and fuel our growth. That's our perspective.

### **Who makes it into the Paris Baguette family, in terms of franchisees? What are the qualities you look for in a franchisee?**

We look at every owner who wants to be part of the Paris Baguette family as someone who is representing the brand. So, having the right people with the right attitude and who care about the product and the brand is crucial. Aside from meeting the standard benchmarks we have, ultimately, we are looking for

the calibre of a person who sees and believes, and shares our vision to reestablish the neighbourhood bakery cafe as the heart of the community. We take it very seriously that every prospective franchisee abides by and shares in our brand values, and upholds our standards.

### **How do you support your franchise owners in realizing the Paris Baguette vision so that it resonates with them?**

We operate with the consistent mentality of how we will support our franchise owners at different locations as we grow and as we scale. It starts at the entry point. When I'm meeting and interviewing franchisees for the first time, I talk openly about our mission, vision, and values. I look for those values in them and expect that they will share the same values as we do. Before any franchise owner opens their cafe, they undergo four straight weeks of intensive training at one of our training centers. It's a hands-on experience for bakers, managers and owners to understand what it takes to represent the Paris Baguette brand, from baking and service protocols to leadership development and brand culture.

We foster open lines of communication. I always have discussions with our franchise owners and operators about their growth and development strategy. If they have needs, we ascertain how we can help and support them as a partner in furthering the Paris Baguette business and supporting their journey and growth with the brand.

### **Recent challenges facing the baking industry: tariffs, labor shortages, and rising egg prices. How has Paris Baguette navigated and overcome these?**

What's helped our brand in the past five and a half years has been remaining consistent in weathering the headwind storms. We have not implemented drastic price increases but have rather taken about a point and a half, once or twice a year, to mitigate but not pass the cost impact onto our guests and consumers. This has been very important for our continued growth in North America.

### **What would you say to other emerging brands in the bakery, café business on how to successfully rebrand and grow through franchising?**

First and foremost, it is to be an active listener: listening to your guests and your owners, and taking people first and building a team mentality. The more you listen, the more great ideas you hear. From there, focus on your product quality. •



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# Flavors to Watch



Some of the most awaited for market studies each year are the ones dedicated to flavor, the elusive trends everyone wants to get the hang of, so that their products ride the hip wave and make customers happy.

By Jo Ilie

**C** This year, beyond the ubiquitous pistachio - via Dubai chocolate, but not only - we could see a significant influence of Asian flavors, sweet and savory mixes and anything driven by nostalgia and comfort, maybe as a response to the instability we see in the world. While different market and trend reports found some specific trends, they all agreed on the major flavors and flavor catalysts.

### INDULGENCE

Global chocolate leader Barry Callebaut has identified key trends shaping the chocolate confectionery market in 2025, highlighting a shift toward mindful, multi-sensory, and health-oriented indulgence. Consumers increasingly seek indulgence that resonates with deeper values, including ethical sourcing, health benefits, and sustainability. The report found that over 65% of adults purchased chocolate in the past year, emphasizing its enduring popularity.

Dawn Foods calls it Elevated Indulgence or Affordable Luxury for Everyday Moments because their Global Bakery Trends report found out that 72% of consumers see sweet baked goods as “affordable luxuries” while 75 % enjoy experimenting with new flavours and textures. This translates into an opportunity to introduce premium ingredients (think Matcha or pistachio), limited-edition offerings and bold flavour pairings to satisfy daily indulgence.

### HEALTH-CONSCIOUS CHOICES

Barry Callebaut also identified that functional chocolates enriched with vitamins, minerals, and adaptogens are redefining health-oriented indulgence. Products addressing mental wellness, gut health, and immunity are gaining favor. Clean-label initiatives, emphasizing natural and traceable ingredients, align with consumer demands for transparency.

### TROPICAL FLAVOR

Exotic flavors allow consumers to travel with their taste buds, even if they can't take an impromptu trip to Bali. McCormick's Flavor Forecast forecasted tropical vibes as one of the most important things bakers should know this year. May it be tropical fruits or island and beach cuisines, all is fair game.

Kerry Taste Charts have shown, the same, that Asian flavors, and especially citrus-based ones, are due for an upgrade this year. Japanese Sudachi, Mikan Satsuma, and Calamansi are finding new audiences outside of traditional heartlands, providing opportunities for new twists on citrus flavors. In Europe and Latin America, Finger Lime or 'lime

caviar' is bursting onto the flavor scene, alongside the lemony-scented Verbena.

### CHOCOLATE AND CARAMEL

Kerry Taste Charts has also discovered that Latin America shows an inclination for the sweet, being the region with the greatest presence of caramel flavors in its food and beverage innovation line-up, often referencing authentic, regional favourites like Cajeta and Dulce de Leche. Traditional chocolate combinations such as chocolate mint, hazelnut, or almond are increasingly being used in alcoholic beverages, providing indulgent dessert alternatives. Barry Callebaut's report supports the same idea, that chocolate is re-invented as a multi-sensorial experience: chocolate products are being designed to engage all five senses. Textures, colors, and flavors that offer immersive experiences dominate consumer preferences.

### SWEET AND SAVORY, BUT ALSO SMOKY

Kerry's 2025 Global Taste Charts found sweet flavors inspired by barbecue continue to show popularity, with Honey Barbecue, Sweet Smoke, and Maple Barbecue being particularly notable. The flavor differentials from regional barbecuing techniques are getting increased acknowledgment in global menus, with Brazilian and Hawaiian Barbecue techniques garnering international attention.

McCormick's Flavor Forecast supported that with their Charred & Smoked category: “These culinary techniques underline and emphasize the natural characteristics of a dish or ingredient. Smoky, charred, roasted and ultra-caramelized notes come through in unique ways and a variety of applications.”

### WHAT HAPPENED IN THE REAL MARKET IN THE US?

While pistachio showed up a couple of times in the predictions - probably because the Dubai chocolate craze had already taken Europe and Middle East by storm in the second half of 2024 and it was expected to cross the pond to the US, nobody could've predicted the impact this trend had on the market and on the global economy at large. “TikTok trend for 'Dubai chocolate' causes international shortage of pistachios” printed The Guardian in the spring, citing concerned experts that underlined that the pistachio chocolate craze came in a time of slim harvests in the US due to climate change. The other significant producer of pistachio, Iran, is so marred with political strife that sourcing it there doesn't allow manufacturers to claim sustainability and ethical decision-making, so it wasn't a choice for many of them. Yet, here it is, everywhere.

As a trend, pistachio din does not limit itself to the famed Dubai Chocolate. This flavor is rising strongly across bakeries, often paired with white chocolate, rose, or raspberry. For instance, Levain Bakery introduced a white chocolate pistachio cookie that quickly became a fan favorite, while Milk Bar has featured pistachio and cherry layer cakes. Its unique taste and appealing color have propelled it from high-end patisseries to mass-market items like Trader Joe's Pistachio Nut Ice Cream.

The Sweet and Savory mashups (Swalty and Swicy) lived up to its promise. Combinations blending sweet with salty - like Salt & Straw's Sea Salt with Caramel Ribbons ice cream—or sweet with spicy - such as Sprinkles Cupcakes' limited-edition Hot Honey cupcake—are surging in popularity. The Gen Z-driven demand for bold contrasts has also brought chili-laced chocolate brownies and hot honey-drizzled donuts to the menus of independent bakeries and chains alike. And it's not surprising at all in a market where mainstream sweets like Reese's Peanut Butter Cups lead the way for salty and sweet combinations.

Middle Eastern influences did not stop with Dubai chocolate. The rise of Middle Eastern flavors is evident in products like Maman's fig jam tartlets and Baklava Cheesecake offered by Cheesecake Factory. Shredded filo-based desserts like kataifi are increasingly appearing in fusion dessert menus and boutique bakeries in major urban centers.

Umami and bold flavors confirmed the expectations that citrus and Asian flavors will be at the center of reinvention this year. Bakers are embracing savory depth with items like miso caramel croissants at Supermoon Bakehouse in New York, and soy caramel cake slices sold through online boutique patisseries. Sour citrus flavors like yuzu are featured in Lady M's Yuzu Mille Crêpes Cake and lemon-mandarin tarts are gaining shelf space in premium grocers. We could also see boozy-inspired and cocktail

flavors. Alcohol-free yet cocktail-inspired flavors are trending, with Baked by Melissa offering Margarita mini cupcakes and Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams launching flavors like Peach Bellini Sorbet. Tequila-lime bars and espresso martini-flavored cupcakes are also appearing in seasonal offerings.

Bakers brought modern twists to classic flavors. Beloved staples like vanilla and chocolate are evolving - Dominique Ansel Bakery pairs brown butter with sea salt in madeleines, and Magnolia Bakery has launched a chocolate-pistachio banana pudding flavor. These updates reflect a broader movement toward elevating nostalgia with depth and complexity.

Tropical fruits are everywhere, as promised. Mango, passion fruit, guava, and yuzu shine in summer offerings like Baked by Melissa's Mango Tango cupcakes and Milk Bar's Passionfruit Cake Truffles. Pineapple and coconut also appear in fusion baked goods and seasonal donut glazes.

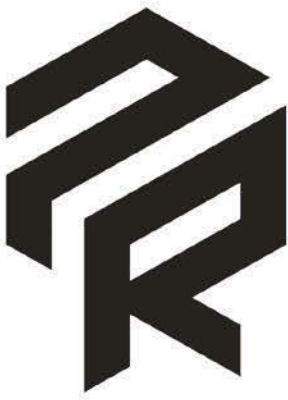
One of the most influential trends of the past five years, health-conscious, continues just as strong. Demand for indulgence with a health-conscious edge continues to shape offerings. Whole Foods Market features a rotating selection of gluten-free fruit tarts, while Doughnut Plant offers baked (not fried) options with fruit-forward glazes and reduced sugar.

Additional notable trends include the rise of hyper-realistic cakes with edible illusions, such as those showcased on Netflix's "Is It Cake?", and texture-flavor mashups like cruffins (croissant-muffin hybrids) and cake pops seen in nationwide café chains like Starbucks.

## CONCLUSION

2025 bakery flavors in the US confirmed the trends forecasted by all the major market reports: pistachio, sweet-salty-spicy blends, and boozy mocktail flavors stand out as key flavors which might continue in the following years. Or as long as there are still pistachios available. •





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# OUT OF THE BOX PACKAGING NEWS



# Follow the Pistachio

Traceability is a challenge. You want both to have tasty and safe ingredients and to support ethical businesses that bring value to their communities. That can be difficult in areas where there is a history of exploitation or where local laws are too permissive. That is why all the major producers of bakery ingredients work toward creating control systems.

By Jo Ilie

**S**everal highly efficient traceability programs have emerged in the past 10 years across the cocoa, palm oil, vanilla, nut, and flour sectors, each leveraging digitalization, blockchain, and geospatial technologies to address supply chain transparency. With the world's appetite increasing - a consequence of increase in both population and standard of living - companies must find a balance between increasing production and making it ethical.

## **PISTACHIO, A GROWING DEMAND**

With pistachio being at the center of new launches in 2025, we could see, in the first half of the year, many warnings from supply chain and environmental specialists about the strain this trend puts on pistachio production. And, as pistachio is a type of nut, which alone brings a certain set of risks with it, namely aflatoxin contamination, the risk of not having a traceability program in place goes beyond environmental impact and workers rights. That is why the PEAR Program (The Pistachio Export Aflatoxin Reporting Program), administered by the U.S. Administrative Committee for Pistachios, was started. PEAR is a formal pre-export aflatoxin control and traceability system for U.S. pistachio shipments to the European Union. The program includes standardized sampling, laboratory analysis, certification, and digital documentation, with strict procedural oversight and periodic audits to ensure robust lot-level

traceability and compliance with EU food safety regulations. But traceability begins at the place of production. In Andalucía, Spain, initiatives such as the Pistachio 4.0 project use traceability technologies based on Industry 4.0 standards and "AgriBlockchain" to record and track data from the plot, farmer, processing conditions, and harvest. This allows full transparency for both producers and consumers—down to fertilization and processing date. Such tools empower farmers and processors, likely improving quality, yield, and broad market access. Iran, one of the world's leading pistachio producers, has implemented traceability guidelines in conjunction with Codex Alimentarius standards and the FAO. Recent training and pilot projects have developed customized procedures for traceability from farm to export, especially targeting EU market demands. Many major exporters globally require certifications such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), HACCP (food safety), Fair Trade, Organic, and Non-GMO for traceability and transparency. Some private companies claim 100% traceability by integrating all steps in-house, from orchard management and harvest to processing and exporting (e.g., Domo Pistachio in Spain). In California, U.S. growers and processors are beginning to use blockchain-based traceability tools for transparent inventory management, labeling, and farm-to-market documentation, responding to increasing regulatory and market pressure for traceable nuts.



## COCOA, IMPROVING EVERY DAY

Cocoa was one of the first ingredients that came under scrutiny for its unethical growing practices and that is why there are so many established programs to improve the production conditions: the companies have been doing this for longer.

Cargill CocoaWise is one of the most impactful programs. It uses GPS mapping, barcoded bag tracking, and digital Cooperative Management Systems to achieve farmer-to-factory traceability. The system is implemented in Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Brazil, and Cameroon, and aims for 100% traceability in both direct and indirect supply chains by 2030. With unique farmer IDs and robust data verification protocols, Cargill's system ensures continuous linkage of beans to their farms, and publishes cooperative-level sourcing via their CocoaWise Map.

Recently, Cargill announced a transformation of its global cocoa supply chain, unveiling a series of interconnected investments that reduce carbon emissions, eliminate waste, and boost efficiency from cocoa origin countries in West Africa to processing hubs in Europe. The company's upgrades span renewable energy, circular logistics, and smart infrastructure. In Côte d'Ivoire, cocoa shells once discarded, are now used to fuel biomass boilers. In Ghana, a solar plant powers production in Tema, and new ISO tanks are replacing disposable packaging, providing the opportunity to cut up to 100 metric tons of waste each month.

Once the beans and semi-finished cocoa products produced in origin arrive in Europe, they enter a fully integrated logistics network. Beans are stored in solar-powered warehouses near Amsterdam, The Netherlands, then transported to Cargill's factory in Zaandam via the world's first fully electric barges—eliminating 190,000 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually. The electricity for these vessels, and for Cargill's Dutch facilities, comes from Windpark Hanze, a renewable energy partnership with Vattenfall.

After processing, cocoa shells are reused again—this time as fuel in Cargill's new biomass boiler in Amsterdam, which will cut greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 19,000 tons each year. Together with the wind farm Cargill and Vattenfall operate in partnership with Windpark Hanze, the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction reaches more than 31,000 tons per year – representing a reduction of site CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of up to 90%.

The final leg of the journey continues with low-emission transport. Semi-finished cocoa products are shipped to Wormer—home to the world's largest cocoa processing site—using BIO LNG trucks, and finished cocoa powder is stored at a next-generation warehouse in Zaandam. Operated in partnership with Green Valley Cocoa Logistics, the facility features solar panels, automated vehicles, and intermodal rail and barge connections to reduce last-mile impact. The chain ends where indulgence begins: chocolate production. Cargill's semi-finished cocoa products are delivered to its own chocolate processing sites and its customers across Europe using renewable fuels and short sea shipping, supporting the company's global target to reduce supply chain emissions by 30% per ton of product by 2030.

This integrated effort also supports Cargill's broader climate goals which include reducing operational emissions by 10% by 2025.

Other programs include CMS in Ghana (Cocoa Management System), which is advancing national traceability, compiling a database of all registered cocoa farmers and transactions to track beans from the farm gate to port, and blockchain-based solutions such as CocoaTrace, FarmerConnect, and TraceX offer scalable, cloud-based platforms for tracking bean provenance and supplying real-time data to supply chain actors. These systems enhance verifiability of geographical origin, sustainability features, and certification.

The latest annual report of the Cacao-Trace sustainable cocoa programme from Puratos and Belcolade shows record payments of EUR7 m to farmers and their communities in 2024. This comprises a EUR3.2 m “Chocolate Bonus” (up 33% year-on-year) and a further EUR3.8 m in Quality Premiums, bringing total historic payouts to over EUR10 m.

Since its 2016 launch, Cacao-Trace has grown to include more than 19,000 customer partners and benefitted 24,073 farmers across eight countries last year. The Chocolate Bonus—tied to annual Cacao-Trace chocolate sales—boosts farmer incomes and funds vital community projects. In 2024 alone, these funds enabled construction of 72 water facilities (towers, tanks and pumps) and seven school projects. The Quality Premium, paid above the farmgate price, rewards farmers for delivering superior wet beans.

## PALM OIL, A COMPLICATED MATTER

Palm oil is used in food production - because of its shelf-stable qualities, high burning point and accessible price -, beauty products and as biofuel, which makes the industry prone to overexploitation. That led to industry-wide initiatives like the RSPO PalmTrace (formerly eTrace/GreenPalm), the global system for certified sustainable palm oil, supporting both physical and credit trading. It ensures robust, real-time tracking of certified volumes from plantation (or mill) to end-user across the supply chain.

Traceability to Plantation (TTP) and Traceability to Mill (TTM) are industry benchmarks. TTP tracks palm fruit bunches from plantations, while TTM focuses on identifying all sourcing mills, used by leading multinationals and certification groups. Satellite & digital monitoring solutions - such as Starling (Earthworm Foundation and Airbus) and on-the-ground verification programs - provide landscape-level monitoring for deforestation and supply integrity. Initiatives such as PALMSTEP target farmer training and continuous supply chain transparency improvement.

## VANILLA, THE VULNERABLE FLAVOR

Vanilla is one of the most vulnerable ingredients because its production is always one hurricane away from nothing. Being cultivated in only a few regions of the Earth, in mono-cultures mostly, it requires traceability monitoring that also includes support for the local communities. Blue Pacific Flavors & NEI's Kilimanjaro Digital Traceability System is one of the biggest programs for vanilla and it employs unique identifiers for every farmer, batch, and transaction, achieving end-to-end visibility from farm to extraction and export. This program in Tanzania and Uganda enhances both quality and socioeconomic outcomes. Metajua + Ecocert (Macky Association, Madagascar) registers vanilla farmers and production with GPS and farmer-specific stamps, enabling precise bean provenance tracing tied to individual locations and growers. While National Vanilla Council (CNV) in Madagascar uses digital traceability for advocacy and to secure sector compliance for export standards and protected geographical status.

## GRAINS, A BETTER WAY

Grains are not exotic ingredients, yet their traceability is just as important as other ingredients'. Traceability in flour manufacturing tracks grain from the field through milling to final distribution, recording supplier details, quality test results (like moisture, protein, and mycotoxins), storage conditions, and lot/batch numbers. European and U.S. regulations require such systems to ensure compliance, authenticity, and rapid recall response in case of contamination.

And TraceGains, the leading provider of compliance, quality, and innovation solutions for the food and beverage (F&B) industry, just launched its Intelligent Document Processing (IDP) solution for material compliance and lot-level ingredient quality control.

Purpose-built to streamline Certificate of Analysis (COA) processing to ensure a product's compliance in terms of quality, performance, and safety, TraceGains' IDP eliminates the need for manual processes while improving accuracy and operational efficiency across workflows.

Built on OpenAI's foundation model, and trained and validated against global F&B industry COAs, IDP is an industry-first that delivers superior accuracy and reliability, even as COA formats evolve. Large-scale brands processing thousands of COAs monthly spend countless days and hours relying on manual inefficient and error-prone methods. TraceGains IDP improves the process by automatically reviewing inbound COAs against required specifications, flagging potential issues where additional human oversight is needed. In time-in-motion studies, IDP eliminated the average 12-minute per-page manual setup previously required, drastically reducing implementation times while ensuring data integrity and compliance.

While recent advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and large language models (LLMs) have improved fields like legal and financial services, the availability of AI solutions optimized for F&B have yet to be realized. The release of TraceGains IDP represents the first vertically tailored AI-powered solution optimized for the industry built on OpenAI trained with decades of contextual F&B data from TraceGains. IDP provides a foundation for the future of food quality capable of addressing specialized tasks effectively, beginning with COA as the first offering. Unlike solutions based on static, zoning-based Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technologies, IDP leverages advancements in AI to read unfamiliar and non-standard document formats with high accuracy. The system also learns over time, enhancing data extraction and accuracy as more documents are processed. Early trials demonstrate substantially higher accuracy than legacy methods, potentially matching or exceeding the accuracy of human comparison at much higher speeds. This level of accuracy is critical at preventing the leading causes of recalls or unsafe products such as contamination, equipment damage, and compliance violations.

## ONE SYSTEM TO RULE THEM ALL

For companies that produce or buy more than one ingredient, there are systems in place that allow them to guarantee sustainability for all. SourceTrace offers customizable traceability software used for cocoa, vanilla, and other commodities, providing farm-to-brand lot-level tracking, QR code/GS1 integration, and comprehensive logging of harvest, transport, and storage data.

## CONCLUSION

The spectacular advances in technology reported in the past five years, together with tighter regulations and a desire to run more ethical business, have allowed companies and governments to improve traceability programs that both improve the lives of farmers and put better products on the consumer's table. •

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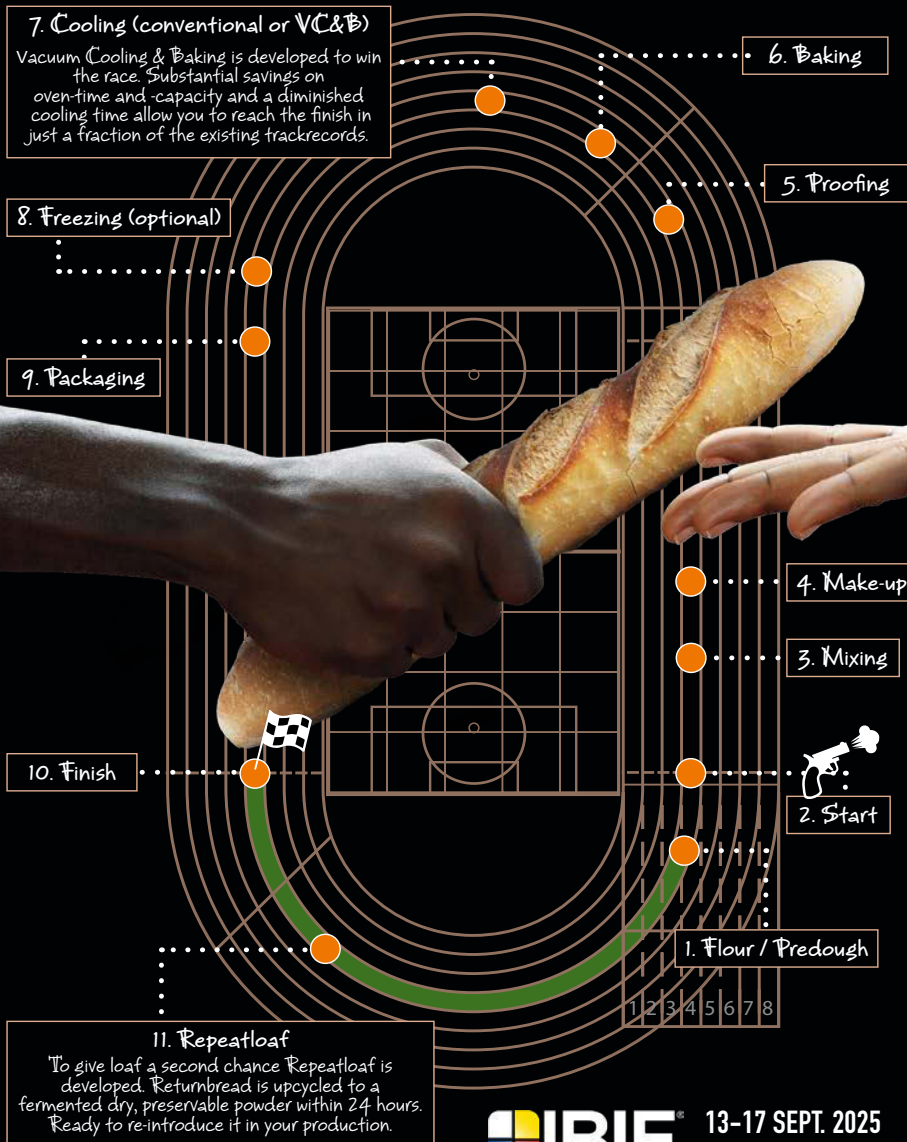
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**WEEKLY NEWSLETTER**

# THE RELAY OF PRODUCTION

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