

Bakery business thriving with BC-grown organic grain

True Grain Bread, a craft bakery and grain mill with locations in Cowichan Bay, Courtenay and Summerland, celebrates 15 years & 1,000,000 loaves

COWICHAN BAY, APRIL 2, 2019 - Say the phrase “sustainable food system” and you risk people’s eyes glazing over, mentally burdened as we all are by whatever buzz words the internet is plying us with this week.

However, BC’s True Grain Bread is proving that it’s possible to build, grow and thrive on a business model that is essentially a quest to reconnect people with their food. Their equation is simple: from the farmer, to the miller, to the baker, to the community. The family-owned company, which specializes in 100 % BC-grown and BC-milled organic flour, is celebrating two milestones this month - their 15th anniversary and the sale of their one millionth handcrafted loaf.

“Our customers know their bread or croissant, or favourite cookie all started on a BC organic farm,” says True Grain President and co-owner Bruce Stewart. “They know the flour was milled here, and that what they’re eating was made by hand, by highly trained craftspeople. They know we’re not going to add ingredients that they can’t pronounce. It’s a system of trust, based on shared values, and it’s allowed us to change the way people experience their food.”

Since they first opened in 2004, True Grain has been a beacon for Cowichan Valley foodies drawn to the promise of organic bread and pastries made by hand using old world techniques. In 2012 True Grain opened a second bakery in Summerland in the Okanagan Valley, and in 2017 they opened a Comox Valley location, in Courtenay.

Over the years, loaf by loaf, Stewart and his wife Leslie, and co-owner Todd Laidlaw have steered the company towards an ever more sustainable and relationship-focused business strategy, working with BC organic grain farmers to encourage the growing of ancient grains like Emmer, Spelt, Khorasan and Rye, and heritage wheat like Red Fife. Seeing a lack of provincial infrastructure necessary to mill the grain locally, True Grain invested in stone mills and started milling it themselves. The company now annually stone mills tonnes of BC-grown organic grains.

“Stone milling has been done for centuries. Milling grain ourselves in small batches helps us protect quality, which means better bread,” says Stewart.

With the milling infrastructure and local organic farming relationships in place, in 2016 they made the leap and committed to using exclusively BC-grown and BC-milled organic grain for their baking, cutting thousands of kilometres of shipping compared to bringing in grain from the prairies. Stewart calculates that this change alone has reduced the company’s greenhouse gas emissions by 11 metric tonnes.



“It’s gratifying to offer this kind of food security,” says Laidlaw. “It not only directly supports local farmers, it encourages a more diverse agricultural system in BC. We understand that people want to know the money they spend does more than just buy a product. Our customers eat their toast in the morning like everyone else, but they know they’re part of something bigger.”

With all these accomplishments under their belt, True Grain is still a small company, committed to their philosophy of organics, quality and craftsmanship. But they know small can still have a big impact, and they’ve set their sights on shining a spotlight on the craft of baking itself.

“The industrialization of our food systems has chipped away at people’s relationship with food, and that includes the loss of people trained in things like craft baking,” says Stewart. “We want to show the value these skills can bring to our communities. Without bakers, there is no bread.”

The True Grain teams in Cowichan Bay, Courtenay and Summerland are inviting their communities to join them Saturday, April 6th, to celebrate with prize draws, sampling frenzies, and general merriment.



ABOUT TRUE GRAIN: True Grain Bread is an Old World inspired European bakery specializing in fresh, local, organic, handcrafted bread. They have long been pioneers of food sustainability and awareness. True Grain Bread is a beacon for unbelievable breads, scratch baking, organics, sustainable business practices, farm to table partnerships, and community engagement. www.truegrain.ca

CONTACT: Bruce Stewart, President, True Grain Bread Bruce@truegrain.ca 250.510.5165