

The Bakery, a new chapter in the book of pastry chef Joost Arijs

“I make sure every aspect is focused on.”

Details do not exist, according to Joost Arijs. "Everything is important," emphasises the Belgian pastry chef. "Everything you make and sell has to be right. From ingredients, preparation methods and finishing to the shop, your packaging and sales staff." In addition to his patisserie and chocolaterie in the centre of Ghent, he opened The Bakery in 2022.

Joost Arijs has already earned his spurs in the Flemish patisserie world within just one decade. His craftsmanship earned him the resounding titles 'Best Pâtissier of Belgium' (2013) and 'Best Chocolatier of Flanders' (2019), among others. In 2011, he started his own business in the centre of Ghent with his partner Elke De Baerdemaker. At that time, the focus was entirely on patisserie. "We also had a limited range of chocolates, but that was an afterthought. The space we had to work in was limited and bread and viennoiserie were not on the books just yet."

Focus

However, chocolate became increasingly popular in the range and when they had the opportunity to expand the property in 2013, Joost and Elke did not think twice. "That is when we started marketing a wider and clearer range of pralines, in addition to chocolate and macarons. We hired more people and chose a clear positioning in the market. I strongly believe in focus. Everything has to be right for us: purchase of raw materials, balanced recipes, efficient production, correct storage, the look of the shop, attractive and practical packaging and so on. Conceptualising chocolate and, since 2022, bread and viennoiserie is only possible when all the parts fit together in the right way."

The Bakery

In 2021, in addition to the patisserie and chocolaterie in Ghent, a larger premises will become available: a former bank building, which is quite a challenge in terms of construction and conversion possibilities due to the vaults present. "You either seize the opportunity or you let it go by," Joost laughs. "Elke and I constantly have new ideas and sometimes the time just isn't right for them. But now, ten years after we started, we saw new opportunities. We felt like writing a new chapter in our book! That resulted in the opening of The Bakery."



The Bakery has been up and running since 2022. They sell 100% sourdough-based bread there, as well as viennoiserie. "Not your most predictable range, but some rock-solid classics like croissants and chocolate rolls with Swiss cream. We also have a lot of room for creativity and French specialities. We see that viennoiserie is becoming increasingly popular across Europe: an international trend that is also catching on well in Belgium."

Conceptual

Joost likes to think in concepts. His parents work in the graphics and printing industry: "I may take after them when it comes to design." For his pastries, the pastry chef upholds a clean style, working with sober finishes for both pastries and chocolates and no unnecessary frills or 'old-fashioned' decorations in his shop. He opts for a subtle interplay of textures and contrasts. He also implemented the same style in The Bakery. "Each bread and cake has a specific place in the shop, neatly presented, as you do with pastries. I didn't want to be a typical bread and pastry shop, where you find everything but can't really focus on anything. We are proud of our current range and the style in which we present it."





Craftsmanship

Joost has learned a lot from leading pastry chefs such as Pierre Hermé, Pierre Marcolini and Patrick Roger. "It's not about who has the very best macaron or the tastiest chocolate cake. It's the experience and the style: it's about the total picture. There's no point spending time and energy on crazy cakes with far-fetched flavour combinations if you don't pay any further attention to them. Without a story on your website, in the shop or on your socials, you won't make it. The complete picture has to be right! As far as we are concerned, that also includes our own visibility. Elke and I are regularly in the shop and we also give customers a glimpse of our bakery when they visit the pastry shop. In The Bakery, you can smell the freshly baked products, see the dough and the craftsmen at work. That transparency is part of our craft.

We also believe it is important that crucial functions in our production are not taken over by machines, but remain true manual work. Hands and eyes are the extension of the craftsman's knowledge. In a small-scale company where everything can make a difference, that is incredibly important."

Future-oriented

Extravagant flavour combinations is not something you can expect at Arij's. "Customers follow their gut feeling and often choose flavours they already know. Our best-selling cake is the Piedmont: composed of milk chocolate, caramel and hazelnut. Fruit and vanilla also do well, coffee flavours less so. Due to the popular 'East meets West' trend, we are bold enough present a matcha kalamansi white chocolate pastry these days. But we won't go much further than that in terms of flavours." Joost warns colleagues that they should never choose inferior ingredients or seek compromises in

production. "There is no turning back. If you want to sell a high-quality, artisanal product, you have to respect and know your ingredients."

Even in a city like Ghent, it is sometimes difficult to get skilled staff. "That's why we decided not to take orders at all as far as bread and viennoiserie are concerned. We don't want to put any unnecessary pressure or obligations on ourselves. There is already more than enough to do here. We also keep our shops closed on Sundays and Mondays. That raises many a Gentenaar's eyebrows. But what if this is the future? More work-life balance for employees and owners alike? What if this makes us a more attractive employer for the new generation of school leavers? "Time will tell. Yet, we are already showing that it can be done."



The Bakery
Vlaanderenstraat 28
9000 Ghent
Belgium

Chocolate XL

Created by
Joost Arij's



RECIPE FOR 24 TO 30 PIECES

Croissant dough

1770	g	flour
230	g	sugar
35	g	salt, Fleur de sel fine
175	g	Debic Brioche Butter
723	g	water
70	g	yeast

Coloured chocolate dough

200	g	croissant dough
15	g	cocoa powder
25	g	Debic Croissant Butter
10	g	water

Turning (folding)

2700	g	croissant dough
1000	g	Debic Croissant Butter

Brownie with pecans

250	g	eggs
300	g	sugar
375	g	Debic Croissant Butter
375	g	dark chocolate, 70%
150	g	flour
3	g	salt, fleur de sel
3	g	baking powder
115	g	roasted Pecan nuts



METHOD

Croissant dough

Knead the ingredients for 15 minutes in second gear. Let the dough rest covered for 30 minutes at room temperature. Leave to cool in the refrigerator for 12 hours.

Coloured chocolate dough

Mix the ingredients and knead to become a smooth dough. Roll out the dough to 3 mm thick.

Turning (folding)

Roll out the dough to 60 by 40 cm. Place a Croissant Butter plate of about 30 by 40 cm and fold so as to create two layers of dough with one layer of butter in between. Leave to cool in the refrigerator for 1 hour. Then give 1 fold of 3 and place in the refrigerator again for 1 hour. Now give 1 fold of 4 rolls and store in the fridge. Fold the folded dough back open and place the coloured chocolate dough in between. Fold closed and roll out to 12 mm thickness. Cut strips 1 cm thick and glue them on top of the dough such that the layers of butter/dough are now facing up. Put back in the freezer. Roll out to 3 mm thickness and cut 16 cm by 13 cm rectangles. Store in the refrigerator.

Brownie with pecans

Mix the eggs together with the sugar. Melt the Brioche Butter with chocolate and use a spatula to mix it with the beaten eggs. Sieve the flour with the cocoa powder and fold into the mixture. Then add the roasted nuts. Spread between a baking tin or on a baking sheet so that the batter is 1 cm thick. Bake at 180°C for 25 minutes. Let cool and cut into 12 cm by 2 cm bars.

ASSEMBLY AND FINISH

Roll the brownie between the rolled-out croissant dough. Place face down in a baking tin. Leave to rise for 2 hours and 30 minutes at 27°C. Bake at 185°C for 15 to 20 minutes. After baking, brush with sugar water (100 g sugar and 100 g water).