

Local bread available through the window at Granton Garden Bakery

Charlie Hanks has already been in the Granton Garden Bakery for a couple of hours when I arrive. There are loaves ready to go in the oven and by the time I leave, I have bought one of those to take with me.

The smell of freshly baked bread is just too tempting.

But this is not just any bread. It is made by hand with heritage flour produced by Scotland the Bread. This is bread which is more naturally produced and so more digestible according to the master baker himself.

He promises tasty, healthy, affordable bread for North Edinburgh – natural food, produced locally.

Most of his bread is mainly wholemeal, made with heritage flour but he explains that he also now uses white flour made from modern wheat so that he can provide white loaves for those who want them. It is clear that he regards this as something he has done with great reluctance, but he understands the need to meet customer demand.

Community Food and Health Scotland provided some of the funding for the bakery and there has been a bit of other investment too.

Charlie explains his journey from studying French to making French baguettes: "I got into baking more as a food activist than as a baker, through working with food waste. I saw that as a symbol of what is broken in our food system which I can't fit into this interview really. It all felt very negative, but when I got into bread I thought that was an equally powerful symbol of our food system works and how it doesn't.

"There are more positive ways of creating alternatives. 98% of the bread we eat in this country is made from flour produced from grain which is destroying our soils and then in turn destroying our digestive systems. This is one reason why there is so much gluten intolerance. The other reason for that is the way the bread is processed once the flour has been made. Production times have been reduced and rely on chemical additives and enzymes to such an extent that we really don't know what we're eating any more.

"But we do know that since a lot of these enzymes have recently been banned that they are not doing us any favours. It really is possible to make delicious bread which is not making us sick, and is available to everybody.

"In all the bread I make there are three ingredients, flour, salt and water. That is all you need to make bread."



Charlie in his kitchen PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter
Charlie is now employed baking two days a week. He started his baking career at Breadshare in Portobello and says that since

last June when he set up the Granton Garden Bakery he has learned so much about baking bread – and that he uses the best ingredients that I can get.

On the other days when he is not in Granton he has been working on a Climate Challenge Fund project in Perthshire growing wheat. Granton Community Gardeners have also planted and harvested their own wheat on street corners, but of course not enough to keep Charlie supplied in flour all year round.

Charlie explains he was inspired by the Small Food Bakery in Nottingham who have been at the forefront of a revival in artisan bakery. He explained they work 'with integrity', focusing on where the food supply comes from, working with local farmers, and working as a team in the bakery.



Bread which is good for you according to baker Charlie Hanks
PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter

He continued: "If it's made properly it will have more flavour you could possibly imagine bread could ever have and it will be much better for your gut, keep you going much longer and

will not leave you feeling bloated, like industrial bread tends to. You could have one slice of this for breakfast it will keep you going all day.

Granton Garden Bakery is part of Granton Community Gardeners a SCIO based in North Edinburgh, where there are now six part-time employees.

Charlie was baking at capacity for three days in the run up to Christmas, but now everything is pared back to prep day on Thursday and then baking on Friday.

Today is the day when you can collect some delicious bread from Granton Garden Bakery which they sell on a pay what you can basis from the window at [@PiltonComHealth pic.twitter.com/1wC5XFF4iR](https://pic.twitter.com/1wC5XFF4iR)

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [March 20, 2020](#)

From the window in the ground floor bakery on Pilton he then hands out the loaves on Friday and people pay what they can afford for the artisan loaves. You can get your hands on one on a first come first served basis. The latest news is that although the community centre of which the bakery forms part is closed, he will continue to bake on Fridays for as long as possible.

“It is our attempt to make healthy, delicious locally produced bread available to everyone who wants it regardless of their means. We try to bake enough to fulfil everybody’s demands but obviously the earlier you come along the better.”

Finally he puts out a plea for some more help: “It is a community project, part of a wider community organisation which is all about people getting involved in any way they can. The way the gardeners tend to operate is that people will come to us with an idea and we will make it happen. That is

really what happened to me with the bakery.

“So this is what I am looking for people to do with the bakery as well.

“We are at a point now where it is more or less viable in terms of producing bread for the community one day a week. But there’s so much more we could be doing. We could be baking more, we could be doing more workshops, we could reach a wider public.

“Any help with any of those things would be welcome. We are definitely looking at doing some slightly more formalised bakery training as well. At this point it is about people coming with some enthusiasm for the project and inspiring ideas to come out of that. It’s not really my place to tell people what will happen. But I am in a position now to offer those training opportunities.”

Meantime look out for news on social media that Charlie is continuing to bake his lovely bread – which we can confirm is delicious! They are trying to take contactless payments through the window of the bakery to reduce health risks. And of course if you have a fever or persistent cough then please don’t go near the bakery.



Charlie hard at work in his bakery space with 'the window' behind him PHOTO ©2020 The Edinburgh Reporter