

Blue Ribbon For Baker Bleu

It has to be the best bread in town; a blue ribbon for [Baker Bleu](#) for baking a loaf with a thin crispy crust and flavour to die for. This bread reminds me of the world renown bread from Poilâne in Paris, so it is not surprising then that Baker Bleu supplies Attica, one of the top 50 restaurants of the world, located just down the road in Ripponlea. Lucky Melbourne; we don't have to fly to Paris, just take a short trip over to 260 Glen Eira Road, Elsternwick to secure one of Baker Bleu's mega sourdough loaves (you can buy half or a quarter) or an exceptional sesame seed rolled baguette with its characteristic pointy ends. The light caraway rye bread, also with pointy ends, is a beautiful moist and aromatic loaf and worth adding to your shopping bag as it will keep for a few days, i.e., if you can stop eating it. Baker Bleu is not so much a retail shop as a retail doorway into the bakery where staff are busy mixing, shaping and moving loaves from racks to oven in what seems to be a seamless operation. Make sure you go in the morning because this great bread sells as soon as it hits the shelves. Closing time is when they run out. [MeatSmith](#) in Collingwood sells the baguettes on weekends but they run out fast too.



Ovens Street Baker

I have been buying a very nice fruit loaf and sourdough bread from Senserrick Green Grocer recently. The bread comes from a baker that operates out of a small warehouse in an industrial street in the heart of Brunswick and aptly named Ovens Street. It is only open on Sundays, so I guess you could say it is more of a pop-up retail bakery, its main business being wholesale. Baker, Pip Hayes, was baker and part owner of the wonderful Wye River General Store; a great stopping off point for Great Ocean Road trekkers. Melbourne is fortunate to have this recent addition to our small but expanding group of artisan bakers but given we are a city of 4.8 million more of

these dedicated people are sorely needed. There are plans to open on Saturdays this year and hopefully expand the reach of their wonderful breads and pastries. Ovens Street has a wide variety of breads, including a light rye, seed loaf, white sourdough, croissants, tarts and Polish doughnuts. The fruit loaf is moist, fragrant and full of juicy chunks of fruit and is fantastic eaten fresh or toasted.



19 Ovens Street, Brunswick, 3056. Open Sunday. No website, facebook page or phone – this baker is too busy.

Bread also available Monday, Thursday and Saturday from [Senserrick Green Grocer](#), 687 Nicholson Street and 384 Rathdowne Street, North Carlton.

Habituel Bakers & Coffee Roasters

One of my habitual pleasures has been to buy the sourdough bread from the Giant Steps/Innocent Bystander cellar door and foodie hub in the main street of Healesville whenever I passed through town. If I wasn't able to stop in for an excellent meal and glass of wine I made sure that I at least stopped for a coffee and secured some of their excellent bread. The businesses have now been split, the higher end [Giant Steps](#) label staying with founder, Phil Sexton, while the [Innocent Bystander](#) label was sold to Brown Brothers and relocated just across the carpark. Fortunately, "Leroy", the bread starter culture has found new digs at [Habituel Bakers & Coffee Roasters](#) further down the main road and is working its magic producing wonderful breads again. Deciding what to do in Healesville has just become a little more complicated: do you have a tasting of the Giant Steps elegant range of pinot noir and chardonnay and lunch there or do you taste Innocent Bystander's extensive line up and stay on for their lunch. Whatever you choose to do make sure you drop in at Habituel for a revitalising coffee and some of that excellent sourdough bread for the homeward journey. Be warned, it may become a habit.

Habituel Bakers & Coffee Roasters: 314 Maroondah Hwy,
Healesville VIC 3777

Crusty Loaf With Spelt In The

Mix

Small artisan bakers do need a day off to stay sane and typically Monday is the day they shut their bakery doors to the public. Last week I was on the road wanting to pick up a loaf and found myself empty handed after stops at several bakeries; either they didn't have much on the shelves I wanted or were closed. I decided I was getting lazy and should just go home and make some bread. It's not rocket science after all. I just had to mix flour, water and yeast, leave it for a few hours and then bake it. It would also be a good opportunity to try the spelt flour I bought a while ago, so I thought I would add some to my usual mix of rye and white bread flour.

Spelt is an ancient form of wheat which has been cultivated since the bronze age right through to the end of the 19th century when combined harvesters favoured the wheat we use today over the hard husked spelt grains. Spelt flour has a sweet, nutty flavour and a high protein level (13-14%) which is great for baking light, soft-textured bread. This mix of spelt, rye and white bread flour gave my loaf a softer than usual texture, a lovely flavour and appealing golden colour. It is worth trying a 50:50 mix of spelt to white flour but be aware that spelt takes up less water, so add the water gradually while you mix to the right consistency. The loaves tend to be moist and have good keeping qualities. Spelt flour is also a more expensive flour, usually retailing for around \$7-\$9/kg. Brands to look for are: [Callington Mill](#) (Oatlands, Tas); [Broken River](#) (Benalla, Vic); [Kialla](#) (Toowoomba, QLD); [Powlett Hill](#) (Powelltown, Vic) and [Laucke](#) (Strathalbyn, S.A.).

The Cast Iron Pot No Knead Bread Method

- 125 g spelt flour
- 125 g rye flour
- 250 g unbleached bread flour (e.g. Laucke)

- 1 tsp salt
- 1 1/2 tsp freeze-dried yeast
- 1 tsp malt extract (optional)
- water

Mix the flour, salt and yeast together. Dissolve the malt extract in a jug with a little hot water from the kettle and then top up with approximately 2 cups of cold water. Add the malted water and mix with a wooden spoon to form a stiff porridge consistency. Add more water if necessary. Cover with plastic wrap, put in a warm location (a cupboard or in a warm room) and forget about it for at least 4 hours or leave overnight. You should end up with double the volume and a lot of aeration in the mix. Heat a cast iron pot with lid (Le Creuset or similar) in the oven at 200 °C. Dust the risen dough with flour, scrape it from the sides of the bowl with a spatula and shape into a loaf with your hands. When the oven temperature is reached place the dough inside the hot pot, slash the top of the dough with a sharp knife and bake with the lid on for 30 minutes. Remove the lid and bake for a further 20 minutes. When complete tip out of the dish and cool on a rack.





Boulangerie Gontran Cherrier

Melbourne is about to become another home of Boulangerie [Gontran Cherrier](#); celebrated as one of the best places for croissants in Paris and with a celebrity chef that pushes the

boundaries of French baked goods, often seen as a no-go zone for traditionalists. It is fitting then that his boulangerie and cafe will be opening this Saturday in trendy Smith Street, Collingwood. He may do some unusual things, like squid-ink rolls, but there will be plain croissants and baguettes, all made with imported French flour and butter for added authenticity and that all important crust that is so hard to reproduce outside France. It opens this Saturday with a promise of free croissants from 10 to 11 am. If queuing for free croissants and associated opening hype is not your thing rest assured that you should be able to find a quieter time to shop or eat in at 140 Smith Street as it will be open from 7am to 6pm, seven days a week. Stay in touch with what is coming out of the Smith Street kitchen on [Gontran's Melbourne facebook page](#).



My verdict: light crispy outer layers, a little bready within, sweet butter taste but not buttery or greasy. They are up there with the top croissants but they lack the fine flakiness I associate with a Parisian croissant. It all depends on preference. On the other hand I could eat these frequently.