

Cuisine 2010 artisan awards with CAFFE L'AFFARE

Rachel Scott

Rachel Scott Bread

Ciabatta

“I always thought I'd either paint or be an architect,” says Rachel Scott. Which probably says a lot about her philosophy on baking. But when she arrived in London in 1989, coinciding with the start of the modern British food movement, she fell into working as a chef, mainly in the pastry section where she started to hone her skills as a baker.

On her return to New Zealand in 1995, she set up Rachel Scott Bread and started to produce hand-crafted breads with an elegant simplicity. Rachel's approach has been to take classical breads and put her own stamp on them.

They have certainly become world famous in New Zealand and the ciabatta is a fantastic example of the classic Italian slipper bread - light, fresh, airy and just beautiful, the judges found.

“There are no shortcuts to achieving loaves with texture and depth of flavour,” she says. She starts with pure ingredients: flour made from Canterbury-grown wheat, Spanish olive oil and Dominion Pacific sea salt from Marlborough in the case of the ciabatta.

“I have an intuitive approach to baking,” says Rachel, “and believe it is through the use of my hands that I gauge the subtle responses required for the dough.”

She still bakes alone in her pursuit of excellence, resisting encouragement from friends to expand her operation. “I want to know what goes on with every single loaf,” she says.

For her, baking is an art - and anyone who tries her bread could only agree there's artistry behind it. She doesn't necessarily want to draw a parallel between architecture and baking, but both, she says, cater to the basic needs of shelter and food, so perhaps she's not that far from her original plans. And she clearly has no regrets.

“I still find baking magical, even though we understand the chemical process. I still find it amazing.” Amazing and magic like her breads.

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