

DESIGN & BUILD



The Boudin family poses beside one of the delivery wagons.

The bread that rose with San Francisco

Special to Exhibit City News

Imagine an episode of Family Feud. The category is "San Francisco." A "good answer" right behind "cable car" and "Golden Gate Bridge" would be "sourdough bread."

The creator of San Francisco's sourdough French-style bread was Isidore Boudin, who in 1849 established the Boudin Bakery and first cultured the mother dough for his signature bread. The mother—or starter—dough has a unique flavor that comes from a wild yeast, found exclusively in San Francisco's foggy climate. Boudin Bakery—156 years in business and going strong—is the oldest continuously operating business in San Francisco.

Over the years the company has seen its share of changes, innovations, and hard times, but the facts prove the success of the company: Each day Boudin produces 25,000 loaves of bread in San Francisco.

The Boudin Museum now on Fisherman's Wharf

The Boudin Bakery story is now accessible to the general public in the museum at the company's new 26,000 square-foot flagship store on Fisherman's Wharf.

The museum includes a demonstration bakery, where a 30-foot window allows people to see dough being mixed on a platform 20 feet above ground; the dough is tossed to the bakers below to be shaped by hand.

The museum also houses the original mother dough, which was driven to its new home in a Model T Ford bread wagon from Boudin's original bakery in the Richmond District.

The fabrication of this new exhibit was executed by General Graphics Exhibits, GGE, San Francisco. GGE was charged with working with design firm Pentagram to translate rough concepts into museum properties, keep within the budget, and undertake all phases of direction for the project. Other than two previously developed interactive exhibits purchased from San Francisco's Exploratorium and adapted for use in this context, GGE engineered, fabricated and installed all the museum displays.



Hanging images in the favorite bread exhibit draw visitors to touch-screen stations, survey participation, and general bread information.

Everything old is new



An approximation of one of the Boudin wagons, based on old photos and artist's interpretation.

New materials were made to look old—to the extent that the common perception is that the bread wagon displayed is indeed an antique. “It’s 50 days new, not 100 years old!” said Bill Nieser, project director.

“The area surrounding the wagon is wired for sound so that visitors hear the horses’ hoof beats and the voices of the bakers. The whole museum is a blending of the old and the new—from the faux cobblestones to touch screen monitors,” Nieser said. To bring the bakery exhibit up to contemporary standards, the museum is ADA compliant with wheelchair access and attention to line of sight.

Traditional baking utensils are displayed along with mining tools (the other big thing that contributed to the growth of San Francisco and the success of baking during Boudin’s founding time). But Nieser’s favorite artifact is an original hand-painted Baker’s Union banner from the 1880s. “We were thrilled to be able to use the

real thing, and not to have to attempt to replicate it.”

There is, Nieser explained, a functioning zoetrope, the precursor to movies, as well as interactive games and animations that show the microscopic activity of the yeast culture in the bread baking process.

An exhibit featuring differences among kinds of bread allows visitors to take a quiz via a touch screen and determine their “bread type” and is proving to be quite a crowd favorite. A 28-foot timeline chronicles sourdough bread against the history of San Francisco from 1848 to 2005.

Boudin Bakery is world-famous for its Original San Francisco Sourdough French Bread, which is baked with the same “mother dough” or sourdough starter used since 1849. Born in the Gold Rush, Boudin Bakery is the oldest business in San Francisco.

www.boudinbakery.com

GGE, General Graphics Exhibits, is a mid-size, value-oriented company employing artisans and craftsmen as well as designers and project managers. For more than 40 years GGE has served the convention, museum, and creative markets with unprecedented attention to detail and to customers’ needs. The company is at 696 Minnesota St., San Francisco, CA 94107. Visit www.gge.com for more information.