

Why Social Responsibility Matters

By **TIM HUFF** Guild Member and R&D Manager at General Mills Convenience & Foodservice, Minneapolis, MN

Bakers and bakeries hold a special place in the heart of the communities they serve. From making memorable wedding cakes to supporting the local business community, from warm bread that is remembered decades after it is baked to food that is part of rich, cultural traditions, bakeries are gathering spots and treasured businesses. Bakeries are a place for connection, appreciation, and celebration.

Whether you have been bringing smiles to local customers for years or for generations, you probably know that “doing good” is also good for business. When you have an authentic connection to those you serve and are a recognizable member among local businesses, you can enhance both your bottom line and the strength of your local community. Your contributions don’t go unnoticed.

Consumers today have a new set of expectations that drives where they spend their dollars. For instance, they want to know where their food comes from and are more interested in the ingredients used to make their food. In addition, they are much more in tune with social responsibility, paying attention to how businesses are giving back to society. Social responsibility ensures that communities work together to become more vibrant, and it provides a great opportunity for bakeries to give back.

When you emphasize social responsibility in your bakery, you can increase market share, serve your community more broadly, and continue to win the hearts of fans and families for generations to come.

What social responsibility means at General Mills

At General Mills, we believe being successful in the marketplace and being a force for good go hand in hand. This includes taking care of the environment and looking for ways to reduce our environmental impact, helping our customers take care of their patrons by offering products that meet their unique health needs, and working to build strong, resilient and sustainable communities. We recognize that these issues are important to our customers, our employees, and the health of the world around us.

General Mills has connected people and resources since our earliest days in the 1800s, when flour was crucial in every home. When our founder succeeded in adopting new technology to make his mills safer, he didn’t keep it to himself. He shared that knowledge with competitors to increase both safe operations and the supply of flour.

In the years since those early days, we have aimed to stand among the most socially responsible consumer food



companies in the world. Within our commitment to build strong communities we are particularly dedicated to increasing food security. This includes working in partnership with several organizations like Feeding America to remove barriers to quality food for those in need.

Just this past April, General Mills worked with Feeding America to launch a new technology platform called MealConnect that helps food businesses donate excess food to their local food pantries and make an immediate impact in the communities they operate. Restaurants, bakeries or any foodservice operation can post their available donation (via smartphone, tablet, or computer) to be picked up within a prearranged window of time by a local food pantry or meal program. It is a way to help reduce food waste, benefit the environment, and put food on the table of families who need it.



PHOTO: GULNARA GROSS

Abe Faber and Christy Timon of Clear Flour Bread donate bread to local non-profits in Brookline, MA.



Making and baking up a difference

At General Mills, we are thrilled to work with so many bakeries, pizzerias, and small businesses that stand out when it comes to community involvement and social responsibility.

One is Clear Flour Bread in Brookline, MA, which has been donating bread to local non-profits since opening its doors more than 35 years ago. At the end of each day, various church groups, food rescue organizations, and food pantries line up outside the bakery to pick up unsold bread and deliver it to homeless and hungry residents in the community.

Early on, bakery owners Christy Timon and Abe Faber made the decision that they would not sell “day old” product at reduced prices, as they wanted to ensure customers would always have the freshest possible product. This decision turned into an opportunity to give back to the community and feed the hungry with surplus bread.

They are proud that bread left at the end of the day is shared with those in need that same night or early the next day, so the bread is still fresh and tasty — often within 24 hours since it came out of the oven.

“We feel really good about donating the bread to people who might not be quite as fortunate as our day-to-day customers,” said Faber, who oversees hundreds of requests for donations of fresh bread, gift cards, and cash for local causes throughout the year — tracking them on a spreadsheet to ensure the bakery is spreading its dollars fairly throughout the community.

Faber notes that even though the number of “asks” can be overwhelming at times, he feels good about helping a diverse group of organizations and causes that are important to the bakery’s customers and employees.

“To each and every one of them, their particular cause truly IS the most important and meaningful to them,” said Faber. “It

really does help all the organizations, and it also gives a very good feeling to all of those individuals to know their local bakery is willing to offer support to their favorite organizations.”

Wobble Café in Ossining, NY, also understands the importance of supporting local causes that are important to its customer base, from sponsoring local youth teams to frequent donations of food for various events.

The neighborhood eatery also offers its space once a month to help host the national “Coffee with a Cop” program that brings police and community together to talk about issues and get to know each other. And the bakery is proud to make hundreds of gingerbread houses each December, hosting private decorating events for such organizations as the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. These events are festive, team-building experiences that help kids understand the spirit of the season.

Your business, your community

While you might be just one small business in a larger community, you can make an impact with an emphasis on social responsibility. Consider how the following actions might make a difference in your community:

DONATE FOOD You can donate extra food at the end of the business day to local homeless shelters or non-profits in need of additional support. If you are unsure where to start, sign up for MealConnect — the new service that connects food businesses with a Feeding America food shelf in the area to facilitate fast

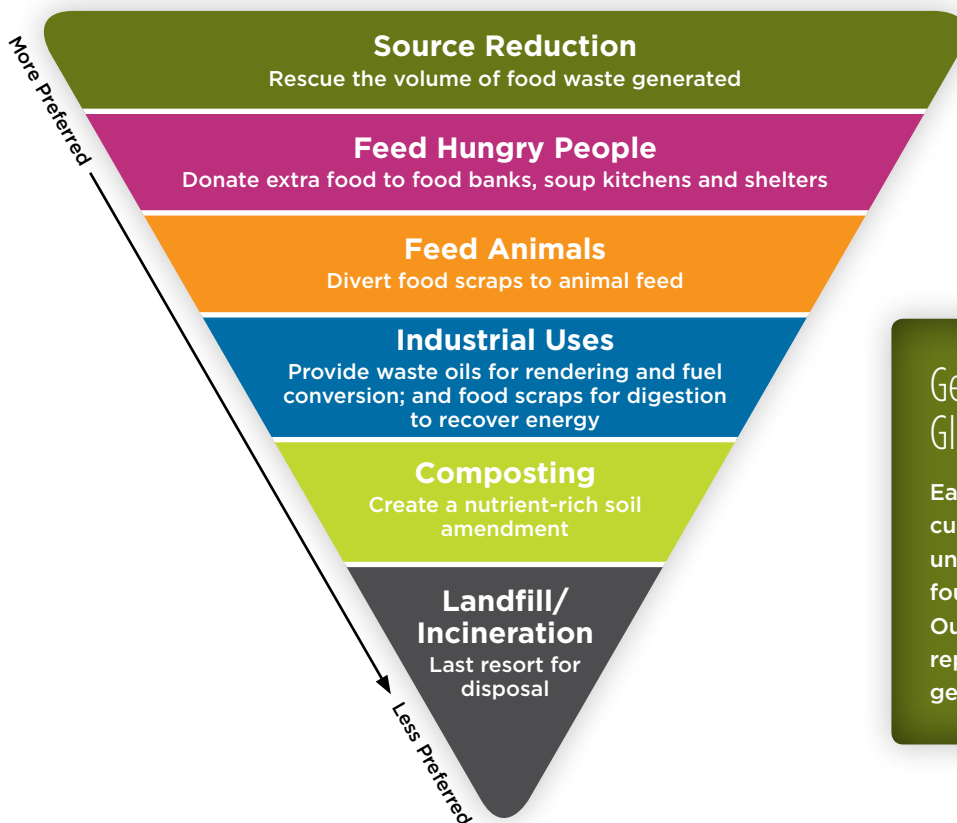
and efficient donation of surplus food. Visit mealconnect.org to learn more. Likewise, contributing to local festivals and events can serve as a great marketing opportunity while you bolster the strength of your community.

OFFER YOUR SPACE FOR COMMUNITY MEETINGS Who wouldn't enjoy a meeting with the smells of fresh-baked bread or pastries wafting in the air? If you can offer some space for non-profit, volunteer, or student groups after hours, you make even better use of your space, while helping another organization save money and further its mission.

VOLUNTEER Once a quarter, gather your employees to volunteer for a favorite cause — consider letting employees select the local charity to increase their passion and participation.

SHOWCASE THOUGHTFUL PRODUCT OFFERINGS More and more customers have distinct health needs, such as gluten-free or dairy-free. When you share in-depth information about the ingredients you use, you can provide useful education and highlight your commitment to natural ingredients and clean-label options.

Ultimately, social responsibility makes our communities better places to live and work. When your bakery contributes beyond artisan bread and handmade rolls, you have the opportunity to use your strengths to improve your neighborhood and community. ☀



General Mills 2017 Global Responsibility Report

Each year, General Mills reports back to our customers to highlight the important work underway and to share our progress across four key focus areas: Our Food, Our Planet, Our Workplace and Our Community. The full report can be found on our website at www.generalmills.com/responsibility.