

# CLEAN LABEL MOVEMENT: AN IDEAL MATCH FOR ARTISAN BAKING

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**W**hile some industries and operations may struggle to incorporate clean label — a consumer-driven movement that focuses on real food, simple ingredients and transparency — it is a marriage made in heaven for artisan bakers who prefer to keep things simple, traditional, and real. Many artisan bakers already eschew artificial ingredients with a focus on natural ingredients, flavors, and processes.

It can entail some creativity when it comes to texture, water activity, and replacing specific ingredients, but many bakers are finding unique and impressive methods for making their operations cleaner.

Whether consumers have a specific allergy or simply prefer simpler ingredients, this “trend” is turning into more of a lifestyle. Ninety-three percent of households have purchased a clean label

product at grocery stores and half of all shopping trips today include a clean label purchase; a full 60 percent of Americans base their food purchases on the absence of artificial flavors and colors, according to the Nielsen Company. The same report indicates that millennials and Generation X customers in particular are interested in clean products. Further, 80 percent of foodservice operators believe healthier bakery items lead to increased sales, according to a Technomic Away from Home study.

*“Clean label gives every baker a chance to get creative, take a closer look at ingredients and processes, and enjoy a new challenge,” said Tom Santos, account executive in National Flour Sales at General Mills Convenience & Foodservice. “Sometimes it only takes a few small shifts to make a big difference in both interest and sales.”*

## THE MARRIAGE OF BAKED GOODS AND CLEAN LABEL: TIPS FOR CLEANING UP

The industry does not have an agreed-upon definition of clean label, but simplicity is the key. Likewise, “no/no” versions of products are increasingly popular, meaning that they contain no artificial flavors and no artificial colors.

If you are interested in making your baked goods “cleaner” to meet consumer interest and demand, the following tips can help you support increased consumer interest in health and wellness, clean label ingredients, and reduction in artificial flavors.

**Experiment with substitutes to offer more natural flavors:** Turmeric, annatto, and dehydrated beets, for example, can all provide striking color, while buttermilk and concentrated dairy products can replace artificial butter. Baking powder is an ideal substitute for aluminum. Fruit juices and purees can also add flavor, color, and moisture to baked goods. You may need to experiment with various amounts and flavors, but natural products can deliver the same great taste and consistency that consumers love and expect from your baked goods.

**Introduce enzymes:** Enzymes can increase the quality of your flour as well as water absorption, while providing a simple replacement for artificial flavors. These proteins already exist in fruits, vegetables, and meat; bakers can introduce more enzymes to replace chemicals in their baked goods.

**Reduce the pH of your dough:** Turn to alternative natural flavors (vinegar, prune



PHOTO: GENERAL MILLS FOODSERVICE

General Mills Foodservice offers a portfolio of baking products with no artificial flavors or colors from artificial sources under its Gold Medal™ and Pillsbury™ brands.

juice concentrate, cultured whey products) to reduce the overall pH of the dough, which can inhibit mold growth.

**Add gums to your operation:** Gums can enhance natural starch, and they can also decrease the amount of fat in baked goods such as muffins and cakes.

**Consider making a sponge:** A sponge can hydrate your dough naturally and has additional benefits.

**Upgrade equipment:** Upgrading your cooling and air filtration systems, if needed, can decrease potential mold formation, while the latest dough-handling equipment can reduce any dependence on dough conditioners.

One ingredient that may appear on some industry watch lists is ascorbic acid; however, this is truly just a refined version of vitamin C, and it can be beneficial to flour strength and to improved yeast function. Ultimately, it can come down to personal preference, but ascorbic acid is generally considered a clean label option for bakers.

While yeast can help replace artificial ingredients, yeast can also make the final product taste “off” due to fast fermentation. Most artisan bakers prefer natural starters, which are slow-reacting but deliver a more flavorful bread.

*“Education is always important, as is making decisions on facts rather than hearsay. We encourage bakers to use several sources for information and decision-making and to contact suppliers, who can often help with explanations, rather than just turning to the internet,” said Santos. “Many artisan bakers will find it easy to incorporate additional clean label practices into their operations, but that doesn’t mean that change isn’t confusing, which is why it’s important to ask questions and do your own research.”*

In 2017 General Mills Foodservice announced that it would help bakeries, restaurants, and foodservice operations meet consumer demand for baked goods made with simpler ingredients, by introducing a portfolio of baking products with no artificial flavors or colors from artificial sources, under its Gold Medal™ and Pillsbury™ brands.

*“Removing artificial flavors and colors is a reflection of our commitment to focusing on more recognizable ingredients in our products,” said Santos. “We want bakers and foodservice operators to feel great about our high-quality baking mixes and premium frozen baked goods and what they are offering to their own clientele.”*

## CLEAN AND CLEAR

Some bakeries are taking the notion of “clean” even further, focusing on cleaner rooms for storage and baking, and reducing UV light exposure, increasing good air flow, and adopting the latest in green appliances.

Likewise, bakers who incorporate clean label ingredients have an opportunity to share their commitment. You can create targeted marketing materials highlighting your commitment to clean label, share a list of the simple ingredients in your products, print up a few clean recipes to offer to your customers, and other creative outreach to let them know you have listened and responded to their needs.

Ultimately, consumers today want and expect shorter labels on their products and simpler ingredients in them. A few clean label adjustments in your bakery can maintain the quality of your products while delivering even cleaner baked goods that still taste amazing. While upgrading to a clean label environment will entail an investment of time and money, it can pay lasting dividends in terms of customer appreciation.

*“Customers truly appreciate real flavor from simple ingredients, and we continue to hear incredibly positive results from bakers who have adopted clean label ingredients and practices,” added Santos.*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A 50-year veteran of the baking industry, Bill Weekley is a member of the General Mills One Global Baking Platform. As an associate R&D principal engineer, he is instrumental in dry mix development, new product innovation, training and guidance on product handling and performance. Prior to joining General Mills, Bill worked for more than 20 years as a technical services manager with a large international yeast company, where he offered technical expertise to in-store,

# HOW TO SPEAK FLOUR

## FULLY UNTREATED FLOUR

Flour that is

- : Not bleached
- : Not bromated
- : Not enriched
- : Not malted

## ENRICHED

Enriching replaces the vitamins and minerals lost during the milling process. The standard flour enrichment includes iron, and the B vitamins, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin and folic acid. The enrichment of flour has no effect on the baking performance or caloric value of flour.

## UNBLEACHED, UNBROMATED FLOUR

Flour that is

- : Malted and enriched
- : Malted only
- : Enriched only
- : Not bleached or bromated

## MALTED

Malted barley flour is added to hard wheat flours to assist with yeast fermentation. During the dough forming stage, malted barley flour provides specific enzyme activity that converts the starches in the wheat flour into simple sugars. These sugars are then available as a food source for the yeast to maintain proper fermentation activity. Malted barley flour also aids in proper crust browning.

retail and intermediate wholesale bakeries throughout the United States and Canada. Bill has an extensive background in pizza, frozen dough, doughnuts, laminated dough, sweet goods, cookies and cakes. Bill received his Certified Master Baker (CMB) credentials in 1990. 🌟