Gusto Bread

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One hour before opening, and Arturo Encisco’s bread is just getting out of the oven, ready to be served fresh to eager customers. He opened the door, to what used to be his living room, and displayed four types of bread on a wooden table, along with a basket of fresh baguettes and 50 pear galettes for customers to purchase. In less than 30 minutes, the 50 galettes sold out.

This is a typical Sunday for Encisco. He begins every Sunday morning at four to have his bread fresh out of the oven by opening time. His curiosity began with a wood fire oven, that was on his previous residency, and it led him to pick up some baking books and thus became a self-taught baker.

“From the very first loaf I just kept at it,” he said. “I really was loving it and really loved the process of making bread. It’s relaxing and therapeutic.”

He loved to bake, but the 28-year-old baker never saw himself working for another baker. Encisco was self-motivated and wanted to make baking into a prominent part of his life. He avoided the farmers market and wanted to establish some relationships with cafés and restaurants in the local area that would serve his bread.

“We were planning a ‘fancy toast’ menu and wanted really great, artisan bread for it. However, at the time there were literally no options for that in Long Beach. Arturo was the first to bring natural leavened bread to the city,” said Nathan Tourtellotte, co-owner of Rose Park Roasters. “Using his bread was a no brainer.”

He would only do pre-orders on Wednesdays which allowed him to build a clientele first and practice how efficiently he could make these loaves of bread.

“We aren’t pre orders (only) anymore,” Encisco said. “I’m more capable and confident to produce more than just preorders.”

The direction of the business changed from what his original intent was after he became a weekly resident at the Marine Market farmers market and until recently, Encisco’s front door only opens on Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. or until all the bread has sold out.

 “He always had this personality where he’ll go deep into his interest,” she said. “I had already seen him go deeply into tea culture and when he started baking it seemed like another interest that he was going deeply into and little by little it started growing.”

Salatino has been with Encisco for eight years and has supported him since the beginning. She assists him during Tuesday farmer's market and on Sundays alongside with her mother.

“It was really inspiring to be around someone like that,” Ana Salatino, designer and girlfriend of Encisco, said, “Someone that doesn’t get discouraged from not knowing how to do something and they are just able to dive and learn and take it step by step.”

His only baking space is his living room. It started with one oven and one small fridge, but as the business grew his work space grew as well. He emptied the living room to make way for the new equipment. His kitchen is decorated with art, baking books, and rustic wooden furniture presenting a friendly display for his customers.

            “Being inviting and welcoming is my goal, to be transparent and honest,” he said. “It’s special to me for people to experience it in the way I do.”

Encisco proudly puts his own Latino twist on his products for example, his company name "Gusto Bread." Gusto in Spanish translates to taste or pleasure. Gusto in English translates to enjoyment or style of artistic execution. Bread making is Encisco's art and enjoyment, and he has been perfecting it for the past six years. His weekly menu expanded from a simple loaf to seeded whole grain rye.  Recently, he created a ciabatta style bread, but he calls it pantufla. Ciabatta translates to "slipper" in Italian, but he renamed it Pantufla meaning "slipper" in Spanish because this was ciabatta made his way. All his bread is made with local ingredients and has no yeast. This specialty attracts customers from all over southern California.

            “I’ve been coming once a month or twice a month and I live in Fountain Valley, but it’s worth it,” said Chris Alieso, a 64-year-old bookkeeper. “He doesn’t cook with any yeast and I can eat his bread without any gluten problems.”

Encisco brings back an old traditional role of a local baker to the city of Long Beach. His popularity has grown from locals and taken social media by storm allowing the Long Beach community and more to share and support Encisco.

“We have bigger dreams than operating in this house,” he said. “I just have to keep the inspiration flowing and keep doing what I love.”