



What happens when one of your major suppliers goes bust?

At Woods we are very proud to make as much of our menu as possible from scratch, buying in fresh ingredients and preparing each of the dishes on our menus, from soups to stock for our sauces, to our own ice cream. However, one aspect of our menu we don't prepare ourselves is our bread. This is because we have found and been using for quite a few years now, a very nice artisan bakery who supplies us with bread which is of a much higher quality than we could make ourselves.

So imagine my dismay last Saturday, arriving into work to the news that my baker has gone bust. Gone, poof, vamoosed! Just like that! No warning, one day the bread is there, the next it's gone! Now what am I supposed to do?

What's the saying? You don't know what you've got until it's gone!! Well, I've spent the last couple of days trawling the internet, phoning bakers, visiting local bakeries, all in the hope that one might be able to supply me both with the high quality bread I've been used to in the past AND the quantity I need. Woods is a busy restaurant and the majority of our customers order bread, some even go for second helpings, so you can imagine the number of loaves we require each week. My wife even went to the local farmer's market on Sunday to check out suppliers for me. But as yet, nothing fits! Maybe my expectations are too high, but why not? My customers expect the best, how can I serve them something which I don't think is good enough for them. One bakery I spoke to, when asked what types of bread they do, answered white, brown and granary! Our usual varieties include curried, tomato and herb, olive, walnut, onion, donkey and wholemeal, so I'm sorry Mr Baker, that's just not going to cut it with my customers!

Another I visited used Tesco value tomato puree for their Tomato flavoured bread, and their olive bread included some manky looking olives from a cheap looking jar. Whilst I know we're in a recession and everyone is trying to keep costs low, using cheap supermarket ingredients is not good enough! You expect me to spend money with you, you have to give me a quality product that I'm prepared to pay for.

So the search goes on and in the meantime, it looks like for now, my chefs will be getting dusty with the flour and needing, proving, knocking back and baking copious batches of our own loaves. At least we can truly say we make EVERYTHING on our menus.

Wesley Hammond

Head Chef,

Woods Brasserie.