

# TASTE THE TERROIR

From the finest bread to the best place for a spot of brunch to the women dedicated to raising the profile of their regional aperitif, France is a foodie's dream come true

The students create organic breads and pastries at Thomas Teffri-Chambelland's school, where sourdough is key; the town of Noyers-sur-Jabron; inset, Thomas Teffri-Chambelland



## THE STUDENTS USING THEIR LOAF

Near Sisteron, in the remote Jabron valley, Thomas Teffri-Chambelland runs the École internationale de boulangerie, a unique bakery school. **Patrice Bertrand** finds out more

“This isn’t just an educational centre perched in the mountains. It’s also a school connected to the real bakery market. One of our objectives is enhancing the bakery profession,” explains Thomas Teffri-Chambelland, a former biologist who successfully transitioned to baking: today he owns several bakeries in France, and is a founder of Chambelland, a gluten-free bakery that supplies the most prestigious restaurants in Paris.

But one of his proudest achievements is the creation of the École internationale de boulangerie (EIDB), a one-of-a-kind establishment located since 2015 in the Jabron valley, 90 minutes from Aix-en-Provence. It’s the only bakery school in Europe that delivers a government-approved diploma specifically in organic and sourdough breadmaking.

“Our students, between 30 and 50 years old, have advanced degrees and good jobs. But for them, those jobs didn’t make sense any more,” says Thomas, 46. “By becoming bakers, they dream of saying to themselves: ‘I get up in the morning, I make bread, I sell it to my customers; they’re happy, as am I.’ That’s why they’re here.”

To access EIDB, in the hamlet of Saint-Martin where Thomas and his family live, you must take a steep back road facing the immense Mountain of Lure.

Each year in these isolated heights, the school trains some 40 men and women, often lawyers, engineers, or computer scientists determined to change their lives, to become bakers and entrepreneurs. Eleven students per session, supervised by four instructors, undergo nine weeks of intensive classes, and six weeks of internships. They all share a goal: to open their own organic bakery.

### TRANSFORMED PROJECTS

Antoine Pascalis, a dynamic man in his 30s wearing a white baker’s cap, is one of them. He’s from a family of bakers in the Drôme and, after a career in the finance and energy sectors, decided to return to baking.

“I came here because I didn’t want to go to a conventional trade school. At first, I found this place isolated, but soon, I realised this landscape and solitude allowed for real contemplation. Because of the work I do here

and at the internships, my initial projects have been completely transformed, and for the better. It is an extremely rich education.”

Thanks to its stone mill, the school produces about half the flour it consumes. The trainees are housed in surrounding villages or Sisteron. The breads and viennoiseries from EIDB ovens are given to local charities or schools. Of course, the breads are made with natural sourdough.

“Natural sourdough, a fermentation of flour and water, has many nutritional properties including better mineral assimilation,” explains Thomas, who is also a consultant for London’s E5 Bakehouse. “Sourdough lowers the glycemic index of bread, which allows a slow assimilation of sugars in the starch and reduces, for instance, weight gain. We obtain more aromatic breads with longer conservation.”

So far, the school, which welcomes international students and offers introductory and advanced workshops, is a total success: it’s booked up until the end of 2022. Will Thomas expand? “Probably not. We prefer to keep a high level of quality and supervision.”

● <https://eidb.fr>