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Jens Jung - Zurich's baking revolutionary

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In 2013, Jens Jung brought the bread revolution to Zurich. With his partners he invented his alter ego, John Baker, where the bread is always baked on the premises with a bare minimum of yeast using only local, organic ingredients. Three years later they took over his father's Jung bakery increasing their impact on the city's baking scene even more. We spoke with him about the organic revolution, asked him what his favourite places are and why Zurich is so special. Jens Jung in one of his bakeries.

Jens, how did your brainchild, John Baker, become Zurich's hippest bakery?

Well, I think we had the right idea at the right time. Zurich seems to have been longing for a bakery with a modern, organic approach. And we have implemented our philosophy very consistently. That explains our success from day one, even if, to be honest, the quality was subject to large fluctuations in the beginning.

What does John Baker do differently? John Baker is first and foremost a bakery where you can also buy bread, and not the other way round. We produce everything on the premises. We don't use much yeast, but rather give the dough the time it needs to rest. The ingredients in all of our products are always organic. We let the dough rest for 48 to 72 hours before we bake it and then sell the bread right away. That makes a difference that you can taste. In this way our bread also stays fresh for much longer than supermarket bread. It's still good after two days and doesn't fall apart like cardboard. We don't use plastic packaging and have a sustainable approach.

You come from a baking family. You bought the Jung bakery from your father only after you successfully opened some competition to his own company? How did that happen?

After trying out this and that I worked in my father's company for 13 years. Then I felt it was time to quit and do my own thing, so I opened John Baker with three friends, much to my father's chagrin, I must admit. Three years later my father wanted to sell his company and asked us if we wanted to bid for it, which we did. And that's how I became the head of the Jung and John Baker bakeries.

Sounds like a tough management job. Do you still do much baking these days?

Well, no, not that much anymore. At the moment, probably two weeks a year, when I offer training and coaching. But with 120 employees and seven sales points, it's more of an office job at the moment. And we're still in the process of adjusting Jung towards the philosophy of John Baker. It's a challenging and varied job, which I like, but, yes, at times I miss the work in the bakery.

You were born and raised in Zurich and still live here. What makes Zurich so special to you?

Zurich has so much drive! This makes the city a perfect place for an entrepreneur like me. The interest customers have in innovation, the purchasing power as well as the lively food industry scene are simply amazing. That gives me and many others the opportunity to do what we like and actually make a living with it. On the other hand, I like all the water we have here: the lake gives the city a certain vastness. And Zurich is a green city that loves organic food, which is great.

What's the first thing you miss when you are abroad? Well, our bread, of course. Honestly, good bread, butter, cheese and wine, that's what I miss most when abroad, apart from all the friends I have in the city. Luckily, Zurich is a truly innovative culinary city and when travelling I realise that other places simply don't have the diversity of fresh produce that we take for granted here.

Is there anything that annoys you about Zurich?

Yes, the small-mindedness that can still too often be found in Zurich. But what annoys me the most is the narrowness and overcrowding in the city centre. The homage to consumerism on Bahnhofstrasse, for example, where the Gucci fashionistas always chase the latest fashion and gadgets. This I find to be a rather ugly part of the city.

Where do you live and what do you like about it? I live in the district of Enge, which is perfect for me. It's very close to the centre, but also very close to the lake, the forest and the recreation area at Allmend. And it's a multicultural district which is home to many Orthodox Jews, who give it an international touch. The only disadvantage is that the sunshine is on the wrong side of the city.

Which parts of Zurich do you always show your guests? I'm a big fan of the [Kunsthaus](#) with its great temporary and permanent exhibitions and, of course, I always take my guests to the lake and the river. If they're food aficionados, I definitely show them some culinary experiences. I love [Rosi](#) with its genuine alpine cuisine and [Gül](#), where they focus on a modern approach to Turkish cuisine.

Do you have a favourite café or some nightlife tips?

I love the small café in the Wiedikon district called [Coffee](#) where they take coffee very seriously. And they have an excellent brunch on Saturdays. On rare occasions I go to [Le Raymond](#) in the city centre, a perfect place to unwind. For some more action I head over to [Talacker](#) bar.

What is your absolute favourite place in Zurich?

Honestly, I really love being at home with my wife and daughter, but another place I really like is the [primeval Sihlwald forest](#). I like forests in general. They have a certain calming effect and the real jungle-like forest at Sihlwald is just a great place to explore some nature close to the city.