

# An Artisan Cup Journey

(By Nevon Sachse) – Team Queensland - Cairns included Jana Ludwig, James Saunders and myself.

## July 2010

Recently Team Queensland - Cairns returned from Sydney following a three day competition for the Australian Artisan Baking Cup™. This was our third journey and each time we had priceless lessons to learn - sharing experiences and information with others. I felt obliged to give a snapshot of our journey.

Firstly the Australian Artisan Baking Cup is the initiative of a several visionary people who have a genuine passion for the baking industry and its future. The effort of the team at Leading Edge in organizing the Australian Artisan Baking Cup™ has been no mean feat and is a logistic nightmare with over seventy people involved to ensure the event is a success. This year alone, eight teams from all over Australia competed at Sydney's Exhibition Centre at Darling Harbour. The Australian Artisan Baking Cup™ success as a 'first-rate competition' has been, and will continue to be, a focal point for the Australian Baking Industry.

## September 2008

The first time I met Jana was whilst walking my two pet pooches not far from where I live. From our brief discussions I realized she was the 'new baker' in the village of Kuranda. About a week went by and I went to visit her in her Bakery/Patisserie. I gave her a brief description about my life and career and mentioned I would like the opportunity to do some baking with her one morning. My obvious 'over enthusiasm' to work with Jana led to mentioning to her to partner (Andréa's) "who is this weirdo who wants to come and bake with me?" I duly convinced Jana to give me a chance and I went to her bakery the following week. We made Ciabatta and several pre-ferments for the next day. What amazed me about Jana was her knowledge of product and thoughtfulness for her customers. I had mentioned the Artisan Cup in early 2009 and asked if she was

interested to compete. Jana was overjoyed to be considered. There was no mention of winning - just being involved in a competition at this level would be an honour. Jana (has a unique manner) in that she genuinely enjoys her chosen profession and I have yet to see her nervous or stressed. Recently whilst in Sydney Jana, somewhat embarrassingly, shared the story with me about the 'baking weirdo from Kuranda'. It made me laugh so much my sides hurt.

## September 2009

After competing in 2009 I was naturally disappointed with the Cairns team in sixth place. It was a learning experience. We were not fully aware of how it all worked. An example is we produced baked and completed the entire bread centre piece at the competition unlike other teams who had their part completed ready to assemble. I felt we had the fundamentals to do better but required better planning. A rethink in what we were trying to achieve and importantly to have fun. The very word 'fun' was something I had not considered before as previous competitions for me always seemed to have had a stress aspect.

## March 2010

The Cairns team was a late entry in the 2010 Artisan Cup due to a team already representing Queensland. I discussed this with the team at Leading Edge and we were included as a second Queensland team in the 2010 competition and we were very thankful for their support. I felt it was important for the baking industry to have representation from the Far-North of Queensland especially since we have a lot to offer as a premier tourist destination.

At this stage our final member joined our team in late March 2010. The day I rang James Saunders and mentioned the competition I expected a long and arduous explanation covering every minute detail. James response however was "sure - love to it

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sounds fantastic - I will come and see you soon". For some reason any concerns I may have had did not matter and I felt I could commence the planning for our journey for the fourth Australian Artisan Baking Cup™ with confidence. For some reason from this point the stress seemed to be different than before.

## April - May 2010

As team captain my responsibility was to ensure that information for the organizers of the Australian Artisan Baking Cup™ was processed in a timely way. Trying to balance this with the usual day to day life's challenges such as work, family and personal time required a blended approach. I e-mailed all information to both of the team members and kept them notified about ongoing news and information as I received it. Once the products had been decided for the Australian Artisan Baking Cup™ we got together and looked at the eleven categories. It was decided who would take responsibility for each product, supported by sharing recipes and ideas. Initially, I believed this was to be the way to go, however it was the recipes that concerned me. What was our competitor's choice? What was our bread centre piece going to be and what sour dough's would have what flora? I revisited the previous recipes used in our competition in 2009. I found myself asking "why I did it this way and why did I choose this flora for the sour dough's?"

I was fortunate and thankful the Northern Territory Team (Robert Schwerdt) had sent me a small two-hundred gram parcel of their San-Francisco sour (our freezer had broken down and every thing was discarded). I was checking the letter box each day and after three days there it was. I had immediate concern - observing this package in my letter box that looked like it was ready to explode. My immediate thought was - I hope the postman doesn't send the Federal Police to my home and 'please explain'. However the recovery of the dough had worked. Thanks NT

We had another group meeting to discuss ideas. Once together we looked at the previous recipes and made adjustments for our first draft. Once corrected and agreed by us all, we decided to have our first practice day.

I arrived on a Saturday at 2.00pm and in two hours processed seven poolish and pre-ferments and refreshed the three sours. The next day Jana, James and I had a full practice day. We discussed our product with each other over the coming week and made the necessary adjustments. Recipe changes were made and sent to each other for any possible corrections and adjustments. I felt we were underway and we were having fun. We decided to taste test our products with friends and neighbours, our unsuspecting guinea pigs. They all had constructive feedback even when they felt they had gained a kilogram or two.

## June 2010

With three weeks left before the competition I was happy refreshing my sours and having fun with ideas and discussions with those around me. We had decided the bread centre piece to be The Light Horseman however we had no clear picture of what it would be in detail. We were graciously given a suitable bread modeling recipe that would be suitable. When I met James soon after he said he had come up with the concept. Great - how did it happen I asked. James responded "I walked into my daughter's room and she was reading a picture book of a horse with a rider". He knew instantly it was what he was looking for and duly bribed (lollies I was told) his six year old daughter for the book. James was underway with his bread piece.

Meantime I started a new sour. My objective was to refresh/agitate every six hours for thirty six hours and when it reached three times its volume in 5 -6 hours it would be ready to harvest. Great I thought, no worries, easy to manage. Over the next thirty six hours the sour did not leave my side. It was

