



Dean Brettschneider

BORN **Waikuku Beach** ROLE **Global baker** RESIDES **Copenhagen, London and New Zealand**

‘I often describe myself as a guy from nowhere, but with many influences.’

BY GERALDINE JOHNS

When in full stride – which is pretty much most of the time – Dean Brettschneider does not refer to himself by name alone.

Rather, his personal description is “Dean Brettschneider Global Baker” – pronounced in a manner that reduces

it to just one word.

Brettschneider the brand is a trans-mogrification: from the boy bred in Waikuku Beach, rural Canterbury, to the man leading a globetrotting lifestyle as purveyor, maker and fount of all wisdom on some of the world’s best breads and pastries.

He’s got all his bases covered: his eponymous products are on sale at artisan outlets in Auckland and

Shanghai. He’s got books galore and plenty more to come. You can see him on TV – and there are more series planned. There’s the website in all four names. His yeast expertise is such that the biggest international baking hotshots hire him as a consultant.

Tonight Brand Brettschneider is on the phone from his London base. Last night it was Copenhagen (where he also has a home); tomorrow he could be anywhere

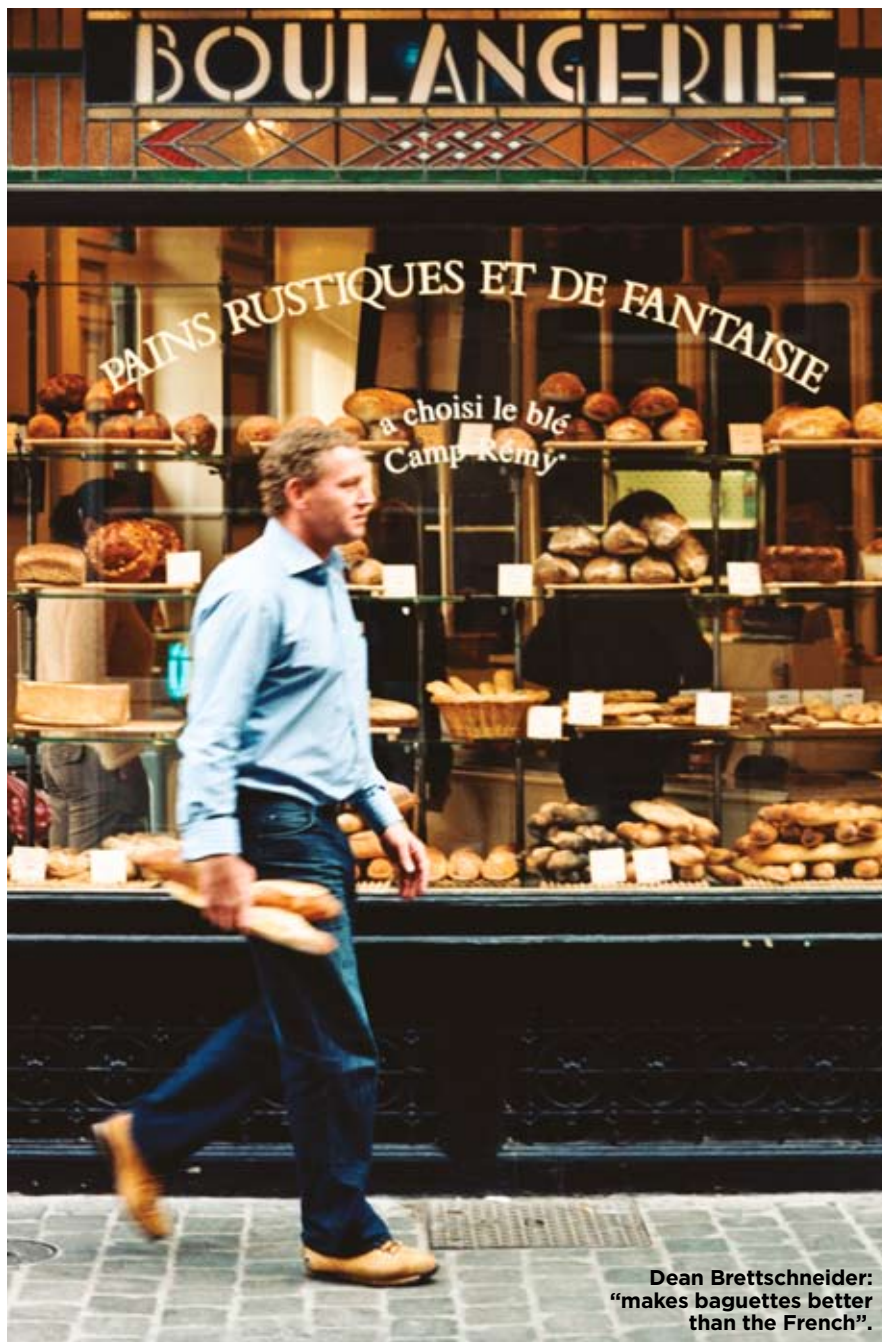
in Europe, or maybe on his way back to New Zealand. But no matter where he is, Brettschneider will maintain an international presence. "I often describe myself as a guy from nowhere, but with many influences," he says. "I'm not bound by any one culture." He is talking about his baking style, but it could just as easily be his lifestyle.

We can blame both insouciant youth and the local newspaper for the tilt his career has taken. Back in his hometown when he was growing up, Brettschneider often got his photograph in the *North Canterbury News* – not for his food but his sporting achievements ("I can pick up a bat, I can pick up a ball – anything"). He liked the publicity his pursuits brought. "Partly where I am today is because I understood marketing – I worked that out at a young age," he says. The son of a Dutch dad, Brettschneider was a whiz at many things athletic, but excelled at soccer and rugby. A former Canterbury Country rep rugby player, he won the Young Male Sports Achiever prize from the Federation of New Zealand Netherlands Societies.

He also realised his sporting career wasn't going to prove as lucrative as his other interest: baking. "I was playing [rugby] four days a week. They were paying my subs – but that was all. And I worked out that baking was the way to go."

So he got himself an apprenticeship at the Rangiora Bakery, and at 18 won the New Zealand Apprentice of the Year award. "I thought I was the cat's pyjamas," he says. Based on that achievement, he got a one-way ticket to London – and swiftly learnt he didn't know a lot – certainly not as far as European baking techniques went. So he started all over again, this time doing an apprenticeship in patisserie. "I spent a lot of time when I was younger becoming an all-rounder. I learnt Euro-Antipodean bakery and then hotel patisserie. What I tried to do when I was younger was be the guy who did the whole lot – with high standards."

Noted New Zealand food writer and critic Lauraine Jacobs says Brettschneider "is perhaps the most ambitious person I've ever worked with". Jacobs – who co-wrote three books with the baker boy – tells how she mentioned to him one day that she was having Australian food guru Stephanie Alexander to dinner at her home. "And he said, 'Oh, I just have to bake for you!' So that night he turned up armed with breads that he'd baked – seven different loaves."



Dean Brettschneider:
"makes baguettes better than the French".

He can make baguettes better than the French, enthuses Jacobs. And nobody makes sourdough like he does.

Indeed. Brettschneider's sourdough starter (a living, breathing flour and water batter regularly topped up to form the basis for his sourdough loaves)

"What I tried to do when I was younger was be the guy who did the whole lot – with high standards."

truly has a life of its own. Because it needs regular feeds, he takes it with him wherever he goes. And so it has been

his constant companion for the past 16 years. "I only need 100 grams," he says of his teenage travel mate. There have been no problems at the border, but occasionally there has been the odd eruption. "One time it exploded in my luggage."

After doing his second apprenticeship in Europe and working to establish his name there, Brettschneider was lured to Shanghai by BakeMark – one of the world's largest baking ingredient companies. "They asked if I'd set up their business in China from a teaching and development point of view. So I did that in 2002 – and stayed for the next eight years."

He maintains an ongoing relationship with the company – and they're baking



his bread over there, too. He has four artisan bakeries in Shanghai. The fifth is in Auckland's Newmarket at Zarbo Delicatessen and Cafe. That partnership is further reflected in Brettschneider's latest book, which he co-wrote with Zarbo owner Mark McDonough.

Brettschneider invests a lot of time, energy and money in his global baking brand. He hasn't finished yet, he says. But he's made enough from his enterprise to be working for pleasure rather than out of necessity. So he'll keep doing it "as long as I'm having fun, and happy and if people are getting pleasure out of it".

Not that it's all for the good of the people. "There's an element of self-indulgence in it. It's very pleasurable to have your name on a book, or to be on TV."

This week, he's working on a new range of signature breads. He's also doing a bit of work for British supermarket chain Tesco – "in a creative and innovative way; pushing the boundaries in terms of flavour and taste". And coming up, there's a consulting gig with Starbucks. "Everyone goes, 'Aagggghh.' I say

"Partly where I am today is because I understood marketing – I worked that out at a young age."

everyone needs an opportunity to get better."

Goodness. Does this man ever stop? Not really. During his downtime he gets on his bike; leisure time means cycling – 200-300km a week. By his own description, he's not the type of guy who can go to the beach and sit for a week and be a vegetable. "While you're



on your bike, you're thinking about the next step."

For him, that next step will involve a degree of discomfort.

"I always have this saying that I'm not comfortable being comfortable. As soon as I get comfortable, I have to find

new ways to push the boundaries."

He returns to New Zealand every two

months on

average and still calls it home. Even if it's only a temporary one.

"I'm lucky enough to be able to travel around the world. There's no point having a brand called Global Baker if I'm sitting in one place at one time. By the pure nature of travelling, it allows me to be at the forefront of what I do." ■

The following is an extract from Dean Brettschneider's Global Baker (Random House New Zealand): I just love this dessert: raspberry whipped cream sandwiched between two large raspberry macaroons. It's so French chic and simple, yet so stunning – savour every spoonful. If you want to make small macaroons, pipe smaller amounts of the mixture onto the baking trays and sandwich together with good-quality raspberry jam. They make great petits fours and will keep for up to a week in an airtight container.

RASPBERRY MACAROON TART WITH RASPBERRY CREAM

MACAROON

140g almonds, ground and blanched

200g icing sugar

100g egg whites

40g caster sugar

a few drops of natural raspberry essence or red food colour

pinch of cream of tartar

FILLING

150ml cream, freshly whipped

20g icing sugar

70-80 fresh raspberries (allow 15 for each tart)

To make the macaroons, place the ground almonds and icing sugar in a sieve over a bowl and sieve together.



You may have to push the almonds through the sieve. Using an electric mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, place the egg whites, sugar, raspberry essence or food colour and the cream of tartar in a scrupulously clean bowl and whisk on high speed until the mixture holds almost stiff peaks but is not too dry.

Remove the whisk attachment and, using a wooden spoon or spatula, mix in the almond and icing sugar mixture until it forms a thick paste. Don't be scared about losing all the air bubbles you have just created – this is the objective so that the individual macaroons don't puff up in the oven.

Place the mixture in a piping bag fitted with a 1cm-diameter plain piping

tube and pipe 8 7-8cm-diameter bulbs of macaroon mixture, 2cm apart, on a baking tray lined with non-stick baking paper. Lift the tray up and bang it on the bench a couple of times to allow the mixture to settle and spread a little.

Preheat the oven to 175°C. Leave the trays of macaroons to sit at room temperature for 45 minutes to create a small crust or skin. Bake for 12-15 minutes until they have risen and spread slightly. Remove from the oven and place on a wire rack to cool completely. Gently peel each macaroon from the baking paper and store in an airtight container for up to one week.

To prepare the filling, whip the cream but before it is quite fully whipped, add the icing sugar and 10 raspberries and continue whipping until thick.

Place one macaroon upside down on a large flat plate and place a dollop of cream in the middle. Arrange 15 raspberries in a circular pattern around the edge, place a second macaroon, right side up, on top of the raspberries and cream, so you have a macaroon and raspberry cream sandwich. Place a single raspberry in the middle and scatter some fresh raspberries around the outside. Serve immediately.

Makes 4 servings.