

Klaus Tenbergen builds the baking community

For Klaus Tenbergen, serving the baking industry as a teacher, association leader and mentor is a fundamental part of his professional life.

“The sharing of knowledge is something we all should do,” Tenbergen says. “I think it’s our obligation to pass on that knowledge to the next generation of bakers.”

Born and raised in Germany, Tenbergen was drawn to the bakery trade at a young age. As a teenager, he came home exhausted after working in the bakery, but he enjoyed working with his hands and having the creative outlet that baking provided.

“I wanted to be tired at the end of the day. That feeling was very satisfying for me. You knew that you were achieving something,” he says.

His international baking career took him to Namibia, Bophuthatswana and South Africa where he owned a bakery and confectionery restaurant from 1989 to 1996 before immigrating to the United States to open a fine-dining restaurant in Peoria, Ill. Awarded the certification titles Bäckermeister in Germany and Master Baker in South Africa, Tenbergen achieved further certifications in the United States, including Certified Master Baker through the Retail Bakers of America and Certified Executive Pastry Chef through the American Culinary Federation.

In 1998, he ventured into baking education when he became the department chair of the baking and pastry program for Kendall College, Chicago. As an educator, he takes a leadership role in industry associations to make connections for his students and support the baking community. He became the unofficial liaison between Chicago retail and wholesale bakers through his involvement with the Chicago Area Retail Bakers Association (CARBA) and Bakers Courtesy Club of Chicago. “It was a great spot to be in because I had a basic understanding of both industries,” he says.

Today, Tenbergen is the director of the Culinology program, a blend of culinary arts and food science, at California State University, Fresno, and can be found teaching well beyond his classroom walls. He recently traveled to Bolivia to consult for a gluten-free bakery, he writes the Workbench question/answer column for *Modern Baking* magazine and

regularly teaches cooking classes to children with special needs.

“To educate is not easy. It is very demanding,” he says. “At this stage in my life, it is time to give back.”

Tenbergen’s accomplishments in the baking industry are extensive—he even earned his doctorate in educational leadership in 2010 and co-authored *On Baking*, a textbook of baking and pastry fundamentals.

Despite his list of honors and



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certifications, he is proudest of the long, loyal connections he’s made with students and peers in the industry through teaching. He keeps in touch with former students through social media and is proud to see students that have gone on to run their own bakeries, other successful businesses and even become television stars as contestants on “Hell’s Kitchen.”

“In the discouraging moments that I encounter from time to time, it is worth remembering that when things go well, the reward is enormous, which makes me devoted to education. We are the leaders of today; it is our responsibility to guide the leaders of tomorrow.”