

Genevieve “Jenny” Bardwell – Artist Profile

1. Documentation of work: Videos making salt rising bread

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aVACHVAI_S0

(video of Susan and Jenny making salt rising bread in 2003)

<https://vimeo.com/265778096/16c485aa57>

(video of Antonio Archer, Susan and Jenny talking about salt rising bread in 2018)

<https://vimeo.com/265778658/0de5e01e39>

(video of Susan and Jenny making salt rising bread in 2018)

<https://vimeo.com/272129661/531f8fe07a>

(video of Antonio Archer, Pittsburgh Forbes Ave Culinary School, Mike Costello, Amy Dawson, Susan and Jenny talking about salt rising bread in 2018)

2. Biographical information

- Date and place of birth: February 13, 1954, Denver, Colorado
- Current place of residence: Mt. Morris, PA
- Description of the art form/tradition: Salt Rising Bread

Salt Rising Bread is a naturally fermented bread from the Appalachian region of the United States, originating over three hundred years ago. This bread is risen by wild bacteria captured on fermented corn and potatoes, which lend a delicious, complex “cheesy” flavor and a dense crumb. I learned how to bake salt rising bread from Pearl Haines, who had been making this type of bread for almost one hundred years in the locale of southwestern Pennsylvania. Pearl made this bread in a wooden bowl that her great-grandfather made in 1860. She learned this tradition from her mother, who learned from her mother, and so on back to the early 1800’s, which was as far back as Pearl remembered hearing about the history of this bread. Pearl was able to pass on her recipes and tips for baking a successful batch of salt rising, same as her elders had done for her. Because the knowledge of how to make this bread and the stories has been passed down orally, S.R. Brown and myself co-authored a book in 2016 titled: *Salt Rising Bread: Recipes and Heartfelt Stories of a Nearly Lost Appalachian Tradition*. Our book documents recipes, history, science, and stories of this traditional Appalachian bread.

The theory that I prefer about how this bread got its’ name, is a “salt” is placed in the “starter”, the primary stage of fermentation. The earliest recipe we found was from West Virginia in 1790’s. It describes adding potash to the starter. Potash is a type of chemist’s salt and derived from wood ashes. Pioneer women in early America were the first to use potash to raise their biscuits, gingerbread, and bread. Eventually, potash was manufactured and called saleratus. Pearl remembered a time when her grandmother used saleratus and pronounced it as “salta-ritus”. When Susan and I first heard Pearl say “salta-ritus”, it was an epiphany, because these words sounded like salt-rising.

The stories surrounding this bread capture valuable indigenous knowledge developed by the early pioneer women and showcases their ingenuity and perseverance.

- Accomplishments/Milestones:

1. 1975 – Associates degree in Culinary Arts, Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, NY
2. 1986, 1989 – BS and MS degrees in Plant Pathology, Univ Massachusetts, Amherst
3. 1989 – Learned how to make salt rising bread from Pearl Haines
4. 1990 to current –researched salt rising bread and the history of similar breads across the globe
5. 1992 to 2010 – certified to teach science, gained classroom experience as a teacher and teacher educator; hired as Curriculum Coordinator for the Health Sciences Technology Academy (HSTA), West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV. (www.wv-hsta.org). Designed science curriculum for teachers and underrepresented high school students across West Virginia, incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy and diversity/inclusion practices.
6. 2006 to present - Curriculum Director of PaxWorks, a nonprofit that offers international teacher trainings focusing on environmental research experiences related to community problems.
7. 2010 to 2017 – owned/managed Rising Creek Bakery, along with Susan R. Brown and Sue McDonald; served salt rising bread in traditional dishes; baked loaves to sell locally as well as nationally through on-line sales
8. 2010 to current - taught numerous classes each year to the public on salt rising bread
9. 2016 – co-authored book with S. R. Brown titled *Salt Rising Bread: Recipes and Heartfelt Stories of a Nearly Lost Appalachian Tradition*
10. 2017 - awarded grant from Pennsylvania Council of the Arts to teach an apprentice about salt rising Bread; taught PA Apprentice Antonio Archer how to make salt rising bread. He completed over one hundred batches of 40 loaves each
11. 2017 to 2018 – Antonio Archer and I taught classes to 5 high school Culinary Arts programs in southwestern Pennsylvania; we taught salt rising bread classes at various public venues.
12. 2018 – awarded grant from West Virginia Humanities Council along with S. R. Brown to teach an Apprentice, Amy Dawson, about salt rising bread; Amy has made salt rising with us, as well as on her own; we have presented talks on salt rising bread in West Virginia towns where this bread has history.

3. Artist statement

Life has a chaotic and at the same time synchronous way of converging to form a person. Various individuals have influenced and led me to visualize what is possible to do with food such as my mother and grandmothers. When I left home other cooks and intellects helped broaden my vision of what is possible – Pearl Haines, Susan Brown, Ursula Daniels, William Woys Weaver. The art of baking salt rising bread came about through my passion for baking, wanting to please others from something I created, and an innate curious mind to figure out the mystery behind raising a bread dough risen without yeast. My husband has supported me to pursue baking and focus on this “female science culture” and the stories behind salt rising bread. Through Susan’s and my research to understand this naturally fermented bread, we have discovered two similarly fermented breads in other regions of the world: Gergoush from Sudan, and Arcatena from Cyprus. Both these breads utilize a similar fermentation as salt rising bread, except the Gergoush starter is made of lentils, and the Arcatena starter is made of chickpeas. I want to travel to these regions, hear the historical stories behind these traditional breads, and learn from the women in each locale before such indigenous knowledge is forgotten. By

coming together as community to honor all three breads, we can explore connecting ideas and opportunities for the future.

5. Contact information

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