



GrowNYC Grains Home Baker Interview: Becky Waddell

GrowNYC: How did you first become involved in baking?

Becky: I've always loved to bake. In high school and middle school, I baked as a form of stress release, and it's always been a way for me to show people that I care. I baked a lot of homemade cupcakes and cookies. I had a chocolate truffle phase.

GrowNYC: Lucky friends!

Becky: Because I baked so much in high school, I was known as a baker. I had this idea in my head that I wanted to open a bakery at some point. But...I had never baked bread. That seemed a little daunting to me.

It wasn't until this past summer that I started baking sourdough bread.

GrowNYC: Did someone give you a starter?

Becky: Well, sort of. I took a bread baking class with Sarah Owens. She's a baking angel. But I will say this to anyone learning to bake bread for the first time – I don't recommend starting with sourdough in a hot summer. What that's what I did. I baked sourdough bread all summer long.

GrowNYC: Is there a particular flour you favor for your bread?

Becky: I am in love with einkorn flour. When I first got my starter, it was fed with rye flour. But soon after I went to visit my family in Portland, Oregon. I brought the starter with me but I only had einkorn flour, so I used that to feed it. I feel like my starter is so much happier and bubblier with einkorn.

I love einkorn for feeding my starter, but I also really love it for the flavor, which is so nice and almost sweet.

GrowNYC: I love einkorn, too.

Becky: Yeah. I felt so validated when I was reading the end notes of acknowledgements of a book called *Grain of Truth: The Real Case for and Against Wheat and Gluten* by Stephen Yafa, and I came across a small note by some prolific baker that said, 'starters do best with einkorn.'

GrowNYC: Do you read about it because of a gluten intolerance?

Becky: No. I'm just really curious about wheat and grain, so I read a lot about it. It's great. I got a book called *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*, which you would



think would be super dry (no pun intended), but it's SO interesting – showing how we ended up, through history, at Wonder Bread.

GrowNYC: Do you have any advice for home bakers who are just starting to work with regional grains?

Becky: Just know that there will be failures. The only benefit of industrial flour is that it's pretty consistent. With local grains, you get more variations. That's the fun part. I think I'm getting pretty good, but sometimes I still produce something weird, like a loaf that looks like a giant fat pita. The thing is, it's always delicious. You can still eat that fat pita.