

BAGEL-MAKING IN OHIO

RALPH RINZLER

"You don't have to be Jewish" appears in bold type beneath a smiling, non-Jewish face—that of an Irish cop, an oriental, or a black. The poster, a favorite of New York subway riders, advertises Jewish rye bread while asserting a basic truth about our multicultural eating habits. Americans, of all backgrounds, prepare and consume a varied mélange of dishes, snacks, and sweets that encompass the myriad of traditions brought by settlers, recently arrived and long established.

The fact is, the preparation of food is frequently the most persistent of cultural traits, lasting among the descendants of immigrants long after language, song, dance, religious and secular rituals have been eradicated or thoroughly diluted.

Although many traditional foods are homemade, others are prepared for a community by professional cooks and bakers. Just as folk communities have had their blacksmiths, basket-makers, bards, and profession-

al musicians to play for weddings and feast days, medicine shows, and juke joints, they also have their culinary specialists. The techniques involved in the preparation of food, like those of craftsmen and instrumentalists, are passed on from one generation to another by word of mouth and simple imitation. In the case of a professional, an apprenticeship may be involved.

John Marx, grandson of a Jewish tailor who immigrated from Germany in the early part of this century, was brought up, as was his father, in the Catholic faith. Like his father, John was apprenticed as a baker in a large plant in Cincinnati. There he learned his craft. After a few years, he took a job as "bouncer" at *New Dilly's*, a club in Cincinnati's artists' quarter, Mt. Adams. He left *New Dilly's* to become head baker, store manager, and partner of the newly formed corporation *Hot Bagels, Inc.*

John is the only baker in the shop

over twenty; his assistants are high school students to whom he teaches the skills of a bagel maker and baker. The shop is family supported; John's sister is at the sales counter five days a week and his father comes in frequently to lend a hand.

One of John's partners, Eddie Kaye, a former stand-up comedian, attributes the marked success of the endeavor to John's sharp wit and personality. The shop produces some thirty-two racks of bagels a week, with seventy-two dozen per rack, all hand rolled.

In the mainstream of the tradition of working America, John Marx is a skilled craftsman whose training depended on the processes by which all folklore has lived—imitation and word of mouth. A second generation baker, and at least a third generation craftsman, he is one of the thousands of Americans, born in the forties, who have turned their backs on desks and white collars to work instead with their hands.



John Marx
and
weekend sales assistant,
Carolyn Becker.

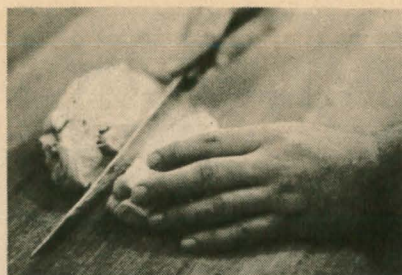
Like
many producers
of special foods
for
ethnic groups,
Hot Bagels, Inc.
prepares its product
at the sales shop,
which
is located
in a typical
urban shopping center.





Customers buy by the dozens and begin eating the hot bagels before they are out of the door.

2



An appropriate portion is sliced away and

5



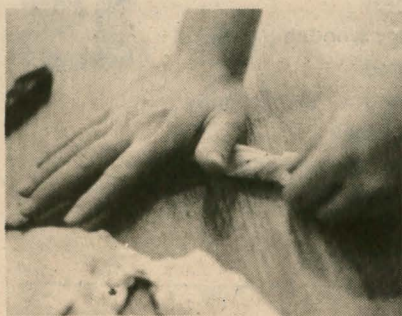
ends overlapped, and

8



Production begins with a mechanical dough mixer into which the simple ingredients—malt, high gluten flour, balancer, salt, and Ardex—(a commercial additive)—are poured.

3



rolled into a thick cylinder,

6



placed on the tray ready for storage in the refrigerator.

9



which is quickly flipped into a hoop,

7



After 15 minutes of refrigeration, an entire tray is slipped into a vat of boiling water.

10



Dough is removed in huge billows and placed on the work table in preparation for rolling.

4



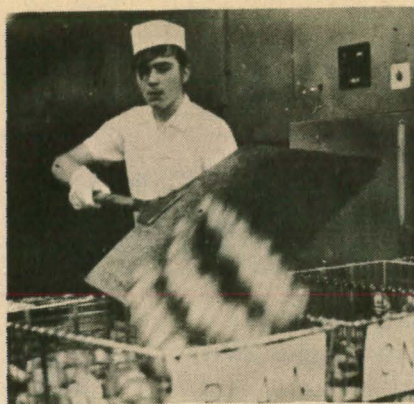
After two minutes, the bagels are scooped out with a wire net and

11



cooled in a steel tray, ready for placement on the canvas-covered wood slabs where flavors (poppy seeds, onion, garlic, etc.) are added before baking.

12



A peel (huge wooden paddle) is used to remove the steaming hot bagels from the oven and carry them to the baskets from which they are sold.

13



Daily recreation at the Jewish Community Center Health Club follows work at the shop for John and 15-year-old Dave Fye, who has been an apprentice since he was 13.

14



John's brother, Mike, head stock clerk at a local supermarket, often sits down to a hand of cards.

15



John frequently returns to *New Dilly's* to see old friends like Liberian-born, old-time blues-singer, "Popeye" Maupin (right).

16