

The Faces Behind Our Food

Interview with Felicity (Fil), Filbert's Bakery

Interviewer: Anna Clayton

Johnny Bean also present

Duration: 24 minutes.18 seconds

Date and time: 19th September 2016 11:30am

Location: Filbert's Bakery, Lancaster

Time (minutes.seconds)	Interview transcript
0.00	Interviewer in bold , Fil in normal type Interjections in [square brackets], other sounds and notes in (these brackets)
0.04	Ummm, so can you tell us a little bit about yourself, what you do, how many people work here at Filberts, and stuff like this... Um (sigh), a little bit about ourselves? About, about me or about the bakery? The bakery is, is, errr, a proper bakery as far as I am, as far as we are all concerned. We make real bread. Ummm, in a world where people don't seem to have very much... know or understand what actual real products are. Um, and what real food is. That it needs to take time, and care and love, but most of all time, to make something that tastes good and is good to eat, and is worth, is worth exchanging money for.
0.48	Ummm, errr, it is also its, it's something that makes you happy. People come in here and they have an honest goodness reaction of happiness (laughs). Sometimes even a little dance! (laughs). Ummm, it's true! (laughs). It really is true. If they come in and see their favourite bread. You can't, you can't buy. I mean, there isn't, there is not very many jobs in the world where you can have that effect on people. Where they'll come in and will <i>genuinely</i> light up when they come in the door because they've seen something that makes them go "yis!" Excited. Brilliant!
1.21	Ummm, so, errr, it started because there had been a bakery and then very sadly there was no longer a bakery any more. Ummm, and I just thought that- that was unacceptable, really. And so we had to start from a position of some ignorance (laughs).
1.42	Ok, so how did you end up baking? Errr, because I moved to Lancaster and I had moved here from London where there was lots of markets and I lived very near one of the best ones and I got used to have really, really fabulous bread and baked goods. And moved here and there was none, as far as I was concerned. Errr, nothing that I wanted to pay for. So I taught myself to make bread. And then I went, errr, I went on a very short course with a lovely man called Richard Bertinet, ummm, and then er. It was with an eye too, at some stage, possibly, theoretically, in the future, maybe, errr, working in a bakery or. My husband kept saying- no well at some point we will have a bakery. And I kept saying no, don't be ridiculous, that's a crazy idea. And six months later we did. No! That's not true. Errr, no it wasn't six

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	<p>months, it was a couple of years. Ummm, it was. It was about two and a half years later when the bakery that was in this building no longer was. Ummm. I was shocked. Apparently he was not. (laughs)</p> <p>[Let me know what you think of the bread]. [Johnny: I will, don't worry]. [Ummm and there will be gluten free cake this week- I have to go and make one right now for a lady that has ordered it –chocolate]. (ringing noise). [Nice to meet you.] [Ummm see you later Anna]. [Bye].</p>
3.04	<p>Yeah, so. Yeah, so, I just carried... I practiced from there and I got better and I wasn't too bad. But I didn't. Yeah, I didn't really think that we'd open a bakery. But, ahhh, it kind of, it happened. It really did happen around me – I was very surprised. I am still quite surprised. Ummm, ahhhh.</p>
3.26	<p>So uhuh yeah, everybody who works here, yeah, is really proud of their job, and really wants to do, really really really wants to make nice things. Errr. I think it's, it's a really nice place to work. It's a real, it's more than just a shop. It's quite a community, this place. Errr, there's a distinct warmth to the people who, t t to everyone that comes in here. There seems to be a lovely filter on the door – I say that a lot. (laughs). But there does. There seems just to be a filter on the door that only allows lovely, lovely people to come in. Ummm, that sounds kind of vain but it just seems to be the truth. People come in and they are nice. Ummm, it's just we want to make good quality stuff. We just, I just don't like rubbish. And, and we want to make stuff that's a bit different. Also, we make stuff that makes people feel, reminds people of, other times. There's. we make stuff. If people come in and ask us, we'll make things, and we will experiment with it, and if it works, if it appeals to a broader audience, we will keep making it. So we may a rye and caraway now, and there's people that, that, that is home. For them, that is, that is the bread of home. Of when they were children. So, ummm, its quite a visceral thing, cooking. [yep].</p>
4.55	<p>So, can you talk us through your average day? I understand it must be a long day?</p> <p>Errr, it can be, It depends on the day- the specific day- as in which part of the week it is. Errr, the, it's a kind of a backwards day because of the way we make the bread. Because we use something called long fermentation, which means making the bread many many hours before we intend to bake the bread, errr, the bread gets, the dough gets made, on the whole, on the day before. So at the end of the day. So at the beginning of the day, whoever is on the early shift comes in ummm at some time between 5 and 6 o'clock – depending on the day, depending on the work load. Ummm and errr, kicks off the couple of mixes that don't have such a long fermentation and then starts scaling and shaping the, errr, that day's bake. Ummm, so they do that. And depending, aha! Depending on the weather, depending on how warm it has been overnight. Depending on how warm it is now, will depend on how long the bread takes to prove because we have no technological wizardry [OK]. Ummm, we are entirely at the mercy of the weather, as in the temperature. So we can come in and discover that it was significantly warmer than we were hoping overnight, and we have a race on our hands to make sure the bread is still OK, good even. Because now, errr, now we have a, sort of, cut off as to what is saleable. Ummm, we are much better</p>

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	<p>however at dealing with, mmmm, difficult dough. Dough that really isn't errr, what we would hope. It's either been too warm, yeah, usually, the only the only problem is if it's been too warm overnight [so not too cold?]. Too cold just means it takes forever. So that just means "oh I'm sorry but it's not ready yet". We can wait, we can do things if it is too cold mostly- it depends how cold. Umm, but too warm means it errr, it can have just over-excited itself overnight. And there's, ahhh there's no structure left in it and we are chasing. Chasing it rather, and trying to get the ovens up quick enough so we can get it in the oven so that it's not lost.</p>
7.12	<p>Ummm so yeah, that person comes in, they do all of that. They will start baking off things like croissant and, errr, pasties. Then somebody else will come in a bit later and they will do things like make scones. Ummm and then the afternoon is concerned with making more cakes, making more pasties, making the fillings...chopping loads and loads and loads and loads of vegetables. That's what the guys are going to come in and do just in a minute. Loads of veg prep happens on a Monday. Ummm, people often wonder why they see lots of veg around here – it's because we make all the fillings that go in all of the pasties and all of the tarts. We don't do anything the easy way. I will admit we don't make the (inaudible)- ummm yet.</p>
7.57	<p>Errr, so, errr, yeah the afternoon is taken up with making those, making errr pasties, and, in amongst all of that we serve the customers and try and clean and tidy around. Ummm and then towards the end of the afternoon the weighing and making of the dough happens for the next day. [hmmm] And so it goes on. There you go. That's a day.</p>
8.15	<p>And so what, what's, why are your breads so tasty? Errr, the long fermentation thing that I mentioned. Errr, the more time that you put into a bread, the more flavour you get out of it. You get other things too- you get acids and enzymes which make the bread keep. (sounds of breaking bread) So, I am demonstrating a bread that is two days old and has had absolutely, has been, not really kept in any sort of sheeshy environment. That's probably still nicer than a, a lot of bread that you would go and buy, well certainly bread that you would buy in a supermarket. Not bread that you would buy in a lot of errr, not-craft bakeries. Just stand, 'standard', in inverted commas, in these bakeries. They still use something called fast mixing. Fast bread production. So, so there is no way that their bread will take 14 hours to make. Their bread might take two or three hours, maybe. Maybe. [hmmm] Ummm, we don't do that. We do it very very slowly. We do as much as we can to get as much flavour. I mean the bread just tastes great. Ummm, and its, and it's down to time. Good quality flour; good quality ingredients ummm obviously, also help. So we use organic flour, actually from a mill in Gloucestershire because we can't find any organic flour closer to home that is, ahhh, an acceptable, acceptable for Lancastrian markets price. So it's a compromise. We are getting it from a bit further away than we would like but it means that we can afford to use it. So...ummm. But yeah that is why it tastes good - because we put a lot of time into it. [OK]</p>
9.58	<p>And there are lots of apples around here (laughs). So you're accepting</p>

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	<p>ummm fruit from anyone?</p> <p>Yes, errr, well, we have a sign up most of the year to say that we will barter for errr excess fruit, veg, ummm, I'm not sure what else we'd barter for other than fruit and veg but mmm we are open to offers. Ummm (laughs) and ahhh people come in and some of them barter and some just want to be shot of it- it depends on the time of year and the vegetables. We were just given a humungous bag of gigantic, well I think they are technically still courgettes, but ummm, they, people had gone away for a week and they'd come and found these gigantic beass of vegetables and they just wondered if we could use them, and we can. Ummm, and ahhh, and the apples are just starting to just turn up unannounced now. Just bags of them. [Yes (laughs)] There are apples everywhere! We will, if we catch people leaving them we try to offer errr some sort of recompense. But some of them just arrive now because people are just sick to death. That they've got all the apples in their freezer, or all the, errr, preserved apples they can possibly use. They have given them away to every friend and family they know and now they just like to not have them go to waste so, hopefully, we can keep up with the supply and do what we want to do with them which is make our home-made mincemeat, for Christmas! I hate saying that word in September but it's true.</p>
<p>11.23</p>	<p>Ok, what do you enjoy most about working here? And least?</p> <p>Errr, errr, I suppose...Oh god. Most? I like that look of absolute joy on people's faces. You can't not like it. I wish I could get pictures but its, errr, so ephemeral. Ummm, but you see it and you think- that's it. That's why we do it. That look on somebody's face when they come in and they're just, thrilled! Just so happy. Practically giddy. And you think- look it's such a tiny thing! This is such a little thing. People don't get like that about a tele! (laughs) or any... So many of the things that people buy, they think that they need. Ummm, and don't make them as happy as, errr, the smell when they come in or, or the sight of their favourite bread, or the thought that they are going to go home and have a really, they're gonna. If they get home in time they are going to get bread this bread, and its warm, and they're gonna put butter on it and its gonna melt, and they're just gonna put it in their face, and they are just going to be supremely happy! And it's brilliant!</p>
<p>12.31</p>	<p>Awww, what don't I like? Errr, the, at the moment what I don't like is errr, training and not being as productive as I wish we were.</p> <p>[James: Morning!] [Come in] (door shutting)</p> <p>But we will get there. We have new recruits- this is James. [Hello].[Hiya]</p> <p>And I've hopes that we will get to that level of productivity and, errr, that we will. It's just constantly trying to be a bit better. So the feeling that we are not quite as good as we could be. [yep]. Urm, or should be. But I guess that's just ambition really. The cleaning is not much fun either (laughs). I wish we had a, you know, gnomes to do the cleaning. Nobody likes that. There is always flour everywhere and dough everywhere. It's just, it's just what we do.</p>
<p>13.20</p>	<p>Alright. And how can small independent businesses like yours be supported? And to appear on every high street in every town? And in Lancaster as well?</p>

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<p>13.31</p>	<p>People just, go out of their way a little a bit. There are people who come in, here, and you'll have heard me say this before, people come in here and say: "I have been meaning to come in here for years; I just haven't crossed the road". They literally don't know, they literally don't remember, for years, to cross the road, to come over here. I don't know how to make people do that. You can smell this place on a Saturday, or any other day when we are baking. You can smell it for tens of metres. Ummm, if that doesn't make people interested enough to just cross, press the button and cross over the pedestrian crossing, then I simply don't know what will. Ummm, and we get a lot of people ringing me and saying you know "will I take up paper advertising or this sort of advertising?" And the answer is 'no'. Because the thing that makes people realise that this is worth more than, errr, this this is not, this is a different experience, this is not Kingsmill. There is no competition in your mouth or in your life for, between this and Kingsmill, its simply putting it in their mouth. Ummm so I don't know. Ummm making. I don't know how, it's it's a slow process- making people realise that cost is not, the cost of something is not simply in pounds and pence. And the worth of something is not just in pounds and pence. Ummm, how do we make?</p> <p>Also, unfortunately you have to have, slightly fools like us who are willing to do something for very little money. Ummm [Are you on a living wage yet?] No [No]. No, we are on slightly above the minimum wage. But we are not on what would be counted as a living wage. We put the prices up for the first time at the beginning of this year because I was worried about doing it before that. Ummm. The reception was absolutely, absolutely fine. It went, you know, without a murmur. The only, the only comments were "it's about time". Which is lovely. [OK] Ummm.</p>
<p>15.24</p>	<p>[Onions, can you chop onions please (sorry I have to give instructions). Do you want to press pause for a sec. [no,no,no]. Errr... <i>Felicity giving instructions</i></p>
<p>16.17</p>	<p>Ummm [ok] ummm yeah its, it's difficult. Yeah, you have, you have to have people. That's the tricky thing. You know, finding people who want to do it. Who feel this is more important than making money. The, the principles. You know, that those principles are worth more than take-home pay (sigh). [yeah] It's hard. [yep]</p>
<p>16.43</p>	<p>Ummm, are there any other opportunities or challenges facing you? Errr just the fact that, errr, the, yeah workforce. Finding a good workforce here is tough because we are the only baker. Like, I never get, you never get people who've very, I have had one person whose got experience in this field. Everybody else has to be trained from absolute ground up. Ummm, which is hard. It's hard for everyone. So for example we have got two starting now, It is going to be hard for the entire brigade. Because, errr, they are learning everything. Umm and everything therefore takes longer. Everybody has to work harder. Ummm, particularly me (laughs).</p>
<p>17.26</p>	<p>Does that mean, did you find a pastry chef? I found two people who were willing to be trained as. But no. No, there is no... So there's a lack of skills in the area?] Yeah yeah!</p>

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	<p>Ummm, unfortunately, even the colleges... people say why don't you go and ask the catering colleges? Because I have had experience of people who have been to catering college and they are not... they are trained to make mass-produced rubbish, food. The way they are taught to make bread horrifies me. Genuinely, horrifies me. The only things they are taught about bread making are appalling. Ummm, they would. So I am better with people who have made bread and bread products at home, even only one or two loaves at a time. Who like that. Who understand that there, that it isn't, it isn't about speed. It isn't just about making stuff that looks fine and gets, and makes enough, makes as much money as possible. Ummm, yeah, it's quite staggering different how, how wide apart the requirements are. So yeah, there's us and there is a place in Kendal.</p>
19.41	<p>Also, you know, there are people who've come and asked, it's difficult, there are people who come and ask for jobs who've got experience but, errr, they might not be able to speak English well enough to, for us to communicate properly [OK]. So they've probably got tonnes of really relevant experience but I don't speak their language and they don't speak mine. Literally. Which is really bad. Which is really upsetting because I would have loved to have taken, taken some of them on, but if they can't read the recipes and follow the instructions, we are all stuffed.</p>
19.12	<p>[James: Are they in the bag or a box?] [They are in the crate in the bottom of the, errr, the wire shelves. Underneath the errr the mixer that is known as grandad. And little one. I think. Otherwise we'll just ring Speights.]</p>
19.24	<p>Ummm, so yeah that's, that's kind of upsetting because I know I've had to, errr, not taken people on who could have had amazing experience with all sorts of stuff. But if we can't successfully communicate. I haven't. We haven't got the capacity here for any sort of (sigh), errr we haven't, for much of a transition. You know, to teach somebody.</p>
19.54	<p>(door opens). [Staff member: Hi!] [Shall we stop?] It's OK. It's alright. Have you got more? Do you need more?</p>
19.56	<p>It's just, I'm interested in the patterns of the bread as I didn't know that. Argh, the patterns on the bread! So, why does bread have patters? What's it for? Because traditionally bakers were illiterate. Ummm, and errr, everything, you weighed using standardised weights, so they didn't need to be able to read. Ummm you, they did, the, the tradition of using cups that went to the States ummm, errr, it was used. You know, they did, they did something similar when they made bread. They used buckets, you know. You'd use, you'd use a huge container. So recipes were however many buckets of this, and how many buckets of the other. Ummm, but when it came to baking things errr... You cut into bread to allow for expansion, so that you get as big a loaf as you can. But, in order to identify one batch of bread, one type of bread from another. Now, often bakers would only maybe two sorts of bread. You know, its only with</p>

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	<p>the Victorians really that lots and lots of different flavours of bread started. But you'd cut differently even probably at the beginning of the 20th century, when people were still were quite, relatively illiterate, in a, in a labouring environment. You would cut differently into bread so that you can tell the difference. And we do it now. Because if we have 12 sorts of bread on the shelf and two of them look white, and one of them is garlic. We don't want that, that to be a mistake (laugh). So we'll put different cuts in them so we know categorically that is not the same bread. Ummm. They look pretty, but it is, there is a practical element to it. Ummm, that, because, these for example. These two here don't look, necessarily, immediately, that different. [No]. No, but they are. That one has walnuts in it for a start. That's going to kill someone if we get that wrong. Not many, but it could. Ummm, so it's, yeah it's to do with; there is, there is a pretty aesthetic but there is also a practical aesthetic. There's lots of, there's lots of things you have...</p>
<p>22.07</p>	<p>We keep the same, we keep the flour in the same places so that you don't have to think about which one it is as well. There's lots of stuff like that- when you're just doing stuff and so I can tell you, I can tell you for a fact where everything, without looking at the bag, what all of those bags are over there. It's a muscle memory thinking – you keep things in the same place. [OK]. Tradesmen always do it. So you go here, and you get this. And you go there and you get that. [Hmmm, OK]. Yes (laughs). Speed and efficiency. We are not brilliant at it but we are learning. Ummm, I don't know, I don't know what else, what else would you like to know?</p>
<p>22.38</p>	<p>It's alright, how is the Food Assembly going? Cause you've been trying that.</p> <p>Slowly. We support it, because I really feel strongly that it's a thing that should have enormous success around here. But they really struggle. Because (sigh), I don't know, Lancaster is very... I mean we are an example. Lancaster is really hard to motivate. They are really, really hard. I don't why. It's such an obvious thing. It's such an obvious thing. And the girl who is running it, well the girl that ran it before- Joanne, and the girl that is running it now- Gill- work so, so hard to try and publicise it to try and make people see something that is in front of their face. I don't, I just don't. I'm baffled as to why it's not an absolutely insanely roaring success. In other towns it is. In Chester they have hundreds and hundreds of members. And, errr, hundreds of pounds of orders every week. Ummm, and yet, after what must be coming up for three years, no two years now... it's still kind of hobbling around here. Its. But we will support it to the very, the bitter end because I really think it's, it's, at some point its really got to take off. It, it seems so crazy that it struggles to do so. Such an obvious thing. Ummmm. That you can just go and pick up all of your market groceries at the pub! On a Wednesday. I mean, why not? How can this not work? I can completely not see this?</p> <p>Is there anything else? You can always ask me when you see me...</p>