

BREAD



Use your loaf

A real experience yields positive results for a market retailer, as **John Ryan** heads to Borough Market

The success of London's Borough Market is something that has been written about time and again in recent years and the area continues to grow, both in terms of size and influence.

Today it is the go-to destination for foodies in search of the best ingredients (and some of the most ambitious prices) and a day out for tourists and locals alike.

And, in essence, that's it. This is a market with market stalls. There are, however, a number of features that set it apart from other markets of the kind, and one of these is Bread Ahead. Bread Ahead is a stall in the market where shoppers can buy freshly baked bread, doughnuts – which are more jam than dough – and other baked products. So far, so market normal.

Head to the fringes of the market, however, and there is a second part of this enterprise – and it has premises. This is the Bread Ahead bakery and school and walking in on a sunny May Saturday (there were relatively few) the interior was exactly as you'd expect from the name. Two rows of trainee bakers stood poised in front of bowls of dough.

Nothing these initiates were doing could not be readily done at home, but there was a sense of shared experience that had passers-by pausing and taking pictures through the window. And next to all of this there was the bakery itself, where more serious bakers were surrounded



Trainee bakers at the Bread Ahead Saturday bakery school

by big bags of flour and large ovens, as well as the fruits of their labour.

Meanwhile, back at the stall, there were long queues. It's a rare trick to be able to take a production process and turn it into something that people will pay money to be part of (different workshops run throughout the year), as well as buying the goods which roll off the line. Fresh bread has, of course, a certain emotional appeal, but it's quite hard

not be impressed by the manner in which all of the parts in this commercial equation have been tied together.

Other retailers, such as furniture emporium Heal's, do something of the kind from time to time, using the shop windows as production showcases for items that can then be purchased in store, but Bread Ahead is one of the best examples of why experience matters for retailers.