

well-aged flour is the secret to success, writes **Fiona Donnelly**

Flour power



Grist to the mill: Kialla Pure Foods general manager Quentin Kennedy. Picture: Bruce Long

YOU know the old chestnut about “fresh is best”? Well it doesn’t apply to flour. Ask Quentin Kennedy. He’s the managing director of Kialla Pure Foods, one of Australia’s largest millers of organic grains, based at Greenmount, south west of Toowoomba. “Flour gets better with age,” says Quentin. “You also see nutritional changes from season to season. We always blend the new crop with the old crop so the change isn’t as harsh for our bakers.”

Quentin took the reins at Kialla in 2006, succeeding organic pioneer and founder Graham McNally who started the business back in the ’80s.

He says fresh flour milled this morning will react very differently to a mature product which has been stored – and this is one reason for the rise in use of flour “improvers”.

“Mature flour gives better baking yields and produces bread with a lighter texture and a finer crumb than new flour. But it needs to be stored properly,” says Quentin.

He advises keeping flour in the fridge or even freezing it for best results – and to stop alternative varieties (see breakout) going rancid.

This method also deters weevils and other pests.

Kialla produces a huge range – from durum wheat flour (for making pasta) through to organic stoneground, and organic “soft” cake flour (made from Rosella wheat).

It also processes a broad selection of specialty flours such as besan flour made from desi chickpeas, a soy flour and a grain called spelt, a high-protein option that is

YOUR GUIDE TO FLOUR

★ **Besan (chickpea flour, gram):** This has a nutty flavour and is popular as a binding/thickening agent. Used widely in Indian cooking, it is a major ingredient in pakora batter. Best stored in the fridge as it goes rancid quickly. It’s made from milled desi chickpeas.

★ **White maize:** This is made by milling white corn and may be used for porridge, or in place of yellow maize flour. It’s a staple in African cooking and must be kept refrigerated or frozen to maintain freshness. Highly nutritious as the oily, protein-rich germ is not removed.

★ **Soya bean:** A soft yellow flour made by hulling and milling soya beans. It has a high protein content and can be used in home baking to give a protein boost.

★ **Spelt:** Makes excellent bread and can be used in pasta making. The wholemeal variety also

includes spelt bran. It’s produced by removing the outer husk then roller-milling the inner kernel. It has a nutty flavour, is high in protein and is easily digestible when baked.

★ **Millet:** Can be used as a thickener or binder in the same way cornflour is used but it needs to be combined with other gluten-rich flours to make yeast-raised breads.

★ **Rice flour:** A popular addition to shortbread used to make it crisper, rice flour also can be used in noodles. When combined with potato starch and gluten-free cornflour it will make a gluten-free plain flour.

★ **Rye:** This is made by milling the whole rye grain so that the bran is retained. It has a strong flavour but is easily digested. It has a limited gluten content but will make a “heavy” yeast-raised bread. It is excellent as a starter for sourdough.

experiencing a massive surge in popularity.

“We haven’t been able to keep up with the demand for spelt in the last few years,” says Quentin, who is now growing the ancient grain all across Queensland to cope with the ever-changing weather and spelt’s highly sensitive nature.

“It’s no wonder that they stopped growing it (spelt) 3000 years ago. We would have all starved if we’d relied on it!”

There’s also been a huge rise in demand for gluten-free flours. “We do a range of different flours, which are not promoted as gluten free

(because other mill flours also contain gluten), made from gluten-free grains – like besan, soy and millet flour,” he says.

Because Kialla is an organic mill, Quentin says nothing is added to the flours.

“We don’t add the folate that’s added to conventional flours because organic flours are exempt.

“We don’t want to add any unnatural elements.”

Kialla is one of the few mills to process only organic ingredients. At other plants, there’s often a mixture of conventional and organic ingredients processed.