

Press release

Within La Lorraine Bakery Group, the Barchon site is strengthening its position as a centre of excellence for artisan breads thanks to its new production line and its employees' expertise.

Inauguration of a new artisan bread production line at La Lorraine Barchon by Ministers Daerden & Morreale.

Barchon (Belgium), 13 May 2024 - On the eve of its 30th anniversary, La Lorraine Barchon confirms its position within LLBG as a centre of excellence for the production of artisan breads. La Lorraine Bakery Group's Barchon site inaugurated its new production line today in the presence of Ministers Daerden and Morreale.

50 years of expertise

The story begins 50 years ago. Two groups of artisan bakers, the Derkenne family from Jupille and the Couline family from Herstal, combined their skills to create the Barchon site.

In 1995, the Belgian family group La Lorraine took over the Derkenne-Coulinne fresh bakery, which was in financial difficulty. Recognising the potential of local expertise, the two brothers - Guido and Marc Vanherpe - decided to invest in the growth and future of the site.

In the first few years, La Lorraine Barchon developed into one of the best bakeries in the region, offering fresh daily products and delivering a wide range of classic breads, artisan breads and pastries to supermarkets. The group also acquired La Mosanne bakery, whose production team and staff was integrated into the Barchon site. This acquisition makes La Lorraine Bakery Group the market leader in bakery products in Wallonia and Belgium.

In 2003, building on the strength of its technology and know-how, the group decided to invest in the production of frozen bakery products. These were a great success, thanks to the new 'bake-off' technology, which revolutionised the bakery market, with products that were 'fresher than fresh', ready-to-bake on-site. This also marked the start of La Lorraine Barchon's international expansion, opening up new markets by exporting artisan-quality frozen products to the UK, Germany and the Nordic countries.

Their flagship products are artisan breads, such as bucheron and forest bread, sourdough baguettes, and ciabattas, the production of which has led to the installation of a new hall on the site with four production lines and an automated storage warehouse.

'Today, we have maintained the spirit and passion of our founders, while developing our know-how and technology over the years to produce bread of the same artisanal quality throughout Europe,' says **Marc Vanherpe, CEO Bakery Fresh of La Lorraine Bakery Group.**

New line, new ambition

Building on this momentum, La Lorraine Bakery Group has invested heavily in capacity expansion in recent years, both in Eastern Europe and in Belgium. In Flanders, the Group is completely overhauling its Erpe-Mere site, while in Wallonia, construction of a new state-of-the-art production line started in 2023. After almost 12 months of work and an investment of around €20 million, the new line is now initiating its first commercial production runs. It will be producing rustic, artisan-quality bread and baguettes on a large scale, as well as premium-quality ciabattas.

La Lorraine Barchon draws on 30 years of experience

The Group's recipe for success brings together the very best ingredients, from natural flour made from local wheat and, since 2023, with first harvest from its Belgian regenerative farming network, to its own sourdough culture to obtain a genuine old-fashioned taste and crumb structure.

While focusing on innovation, La Lorraine Bakery Group's technology maintains respect for the dough, with a very long fermentation time, a high-heat oven and automation of repetitive gestures. The range of raw materials is always sourced from local farms, within a maximum radius of 300 kilometres.

Thanks to this new line, the Barchon site will be able to triple its volumes of frozen artisanal products over the next few years, strengthening its position as the Group's centre of excellence for artisanal breads. It is the combination of cutting-edge technology and the know-how of Barchon's employees that enables it to achieve this quality.

Frédéric Daerden, Budget Minister & Vice-President of the Government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, 'By inaugurating this new line of artisan breads, we are celebrating a heritage of know-how and authenticity. The Lorraine Bakery Group has for many years been a vehicle for commitment to excellence and tradition, embodying the deepest values of our culture and our region.'

'It is important to be able to rely on the initiative of certain companies to guarantee the future of the local economy, innovation and know-how. With this new production line, La Lorraine Bakery Group is once again investing in promising prospects in Belgium,' says **Christie Morreale, Walloon Minister of Employment**.

La Lorraine Barchon's 350 employees are ready to roll up their sleeves for a new stage of growth

To achieve its future ambitions, La Lorraine Barchon's more than 350 employees and their unrivalled know-how are essential to the production of quality products. To attract the best talent, La Lorraine Bakery Group has just launched its new recruitment campaign under the slogan "Ready to roll up your sleeves?" The investment in the new production line will contribute to future job growth at the Barchon site.

'We are a fast-growing family business with Belgian roots and strong values. All our employees make a difference, whether they work in management, sales or on the production line: everyone contributes. Despite the rapid growth of our organisation, we remain very agile and enterprising. At Barchon, too, we like to roll up our sleeves: the inauguration of this new line with top-quality artisanal products is proof of that. It's something our teams can be very proud of,' says **Marc Vanherpe**.

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About La Lorraine Bakery Group

La Lorraine Bakery Group (LLBG) is a 100% family-owned milling and bakery company, with headquarter in Belgium, offering a wide range of authentic, fresh and frozen bakery products. Every day, more than 5000 dedicated employees produce and sell high-quality bakery products to consumers, supermarkets and the foodservice sector around the world.

We are building a leading international company operating in more than 35 countries and producing bakery products in 9 countries. We are passionate about growth and have the ambition to transform the bakery market with our long-standing expertise, new technologies and motivated and talented employees. The company operates in four business areas: Frozen Bakery, Fresh Bakery, Store Concepts and Milling.

Our main financial objectives are long-term value creation and qualitative growth through innovation and entrepreneurship. The Group reported revenue of 1.36 billion EUR in 2023.

We aim to remain sustainable and entrepreneurial for many generations to come, with a passion for quality and innovation and truly embodying the spirit of a company that does well for all its stakeholders – so that we become not only a bigger, but above all a better company.

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