

Charles Fleischmann

One author calls the business an "Empire of Microbes." It started when Charles Fleischmann created compressed yeast for the commercial market 140 years ago. The invention revolutionized the baking industry, started the Fleischmann Yeast Co. on its way to be-

coming an industry leader and even played a role in the country's westward expansion.

For such innovation and commitment to the industry, Charles Fleischmann this year became a member in the American Society of Baking's Hall of Fame.

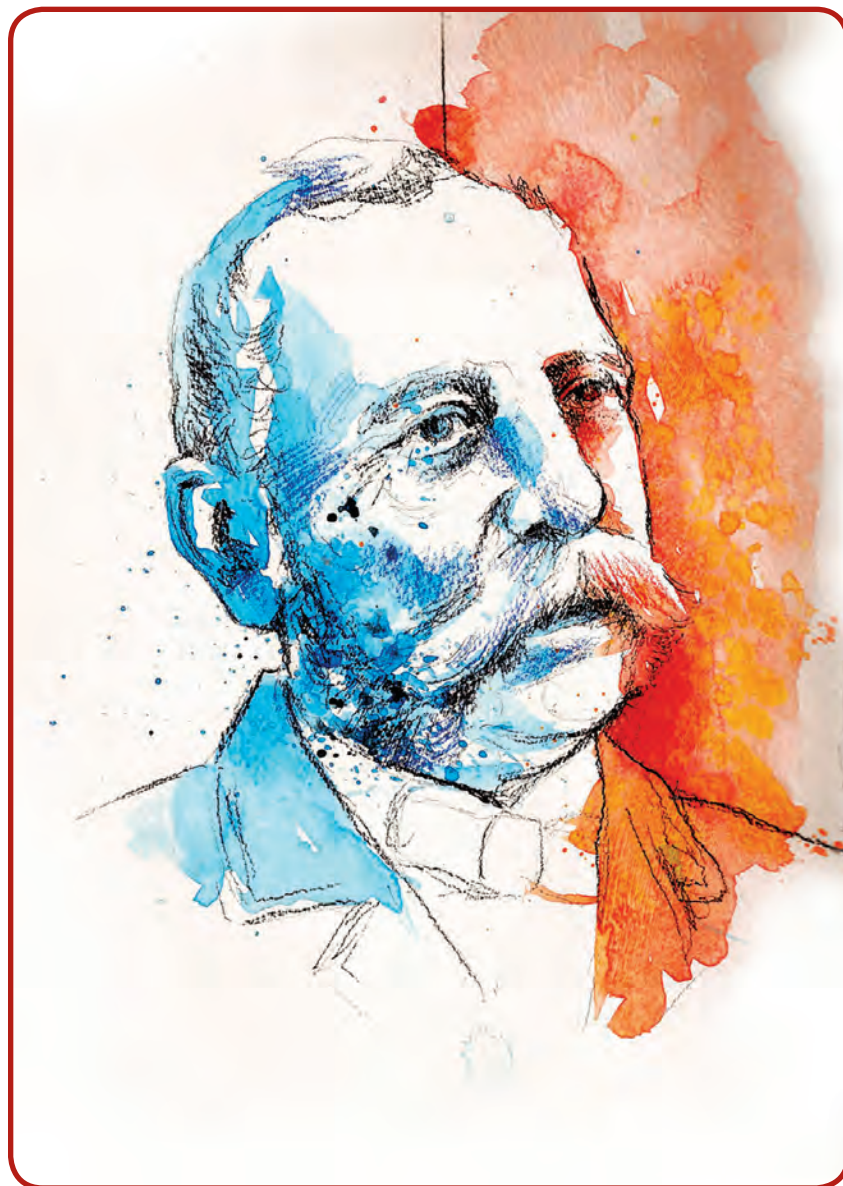
"Yeast has continued to play a vital role in the production of baked goods," said Andrew Armstrong, president of Fleischmann's Yeast, at the A.S.B. Hall of Fame ceremony in Chicago in March. "Its health benefits are still promoted by the trade today. For this we thank Charles Fleischmann for his contributions to the method of this process and welcome him into the American Society of Baking's Hall of Fame."

According to an obituary from the Dec. 11, 1897, issue of *The New York Times*, Mr. Fleischmann was born in Hungary in 1834 and arrived in the United States in 1866 as "a stranger, and unprovided, except with natural gifts — brains, nerve, tireless industry, and a fine inventive genius."

Mr. Fleischmann's contributions to the baking industry are detailed in the book "The Fleischmann Yeast Family" written by P. Christiaan Klieger and published by Arcadia Publishing in 2004.

Chapter One, titled "Empire of Microbes," begins, "The history of Fleischmann Yeast can be summarized into several periods based on substantially different marketing approaches reflecting prevailing attitudes at the time. The first was designed, no doubt, on Charles Fleischmann's convictions that the bakeries of the Austrian Empire produced a product far superior to that in America. He felt it was primarily due to the quality of the yeast."

At that time, yeast was brewed at home. In 1868, Mr. Fleischmann began to market compressed yeast, produced





Andrew Armstrong, president of Fleischmann's Yeast, by Charles Fleischmann's Hall of Fame plaque.

by a mixture of boiled corn, rye and barley malt that was transformed into brewers' yeast. During the 48-hour processing period, the heavy froth was skimmed off the top of the brew, placed in a silk bag and submerged in cold water. The residue was cleaned and enclosed in a cotton bag and compressed into a block using hydraulic pressure.

The compressed yeast offered a lighter, tender bread crumb for home and commercial baking, according to Fleischmann's Yeast. The company sold the product through a nationwide network of sales agencies using horse-drawn carriages.

"Home baking was the rule of the day," Mr. Armstrong said at the Hall of Fame ceremony. "The company considered the quality of its product and the distribution system it offered to be highly superior to the competition. Utilizing a superb distribution network, sales and profits exploded."

Mr. Kliegger added in "The Fleischmann Yeast Family" book, "Fleischmann's approached the work of baking also as a sacrament — bread was the staff of life, nature's perfect food. The message fit hand-in-glove with the expansion of American society to the West.

"Home baking was often a necessity for the pioneers of the late 19th century. What better message to stress than family strength, self-reliance, and good nutrition, with homemade

bread serving as a link to all these values?"

In 1876, the Fleischmann Co., then based in Cincinnati, participated in the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia and educated both the homemaker and the commercial baker on the benefits of compressed yeast.

By 1879 the company had more than 1,000 bakeries as clients. After the invention of refrigerated rail cars in the 1880s, Fleischmann's Yeast could be shipped anywhere in the country, which included shipments made to rural bakers and grocers.

Mr. Fleischmann died on Dec. 10, 1897. *The New York Times* obituary stated he served as a senator for the state of Ohio and as a bank president.

Active in horse racing, he once owned Halma, winner of the 1895 Kentucky Derby.

"Mr. Fleischmann's career is a remarkable illustration of the possibilities of this country in all departments of life," the story read.

The legacy of Mr. Fleischmann's career in baking and innovation in yeast continues today. Fleischmann's Yeast, now a division of AB Mauri Food Inc., ranks as a market leader in yeast and baking ingredient products. The company, based in Chesterfield, Mo., has four manufacturing plants in North America and sells yeast under the Fleischmann's Yeast brand name. Bakery ingredients, including powdered dough conditioners, tablet dough conditioners, chemical leaveners, mold inhibitors, syrups and malts, vinegars and acidulants and grain blends, are sold under the AB Mauri brand name.

"Most Americans may not realize the impact that yeast has in the food industry," said William McKeown, vice-president of marketing for Fleischmann's Yeast. "Bakers and ingredient companies continue to make improvements that benefit consumers. For example, Fleischmann's Yeast recently developed a commercial yeast, called Baker's Select, that improves the quality of frozen dough, a product that allows quick, convenient baking in home and commercial settings without sacrificing taste." ■

