

[Home](#)

Building Community, One Loaf at a Time

A bread-making workshop at Eno Terra on Oct. 18th is about more than just baking.

ARTICLE | OCTOBER 13, 2011 - 11:27AM | BY BONNIE SCHULTZ



Photo by Raoul Momo

Nadezda (“Nadia”) Savova is a Princeton Anthropology graduate student who believes you can change the world by the simple act of making bread. In just two years she has proven this by building a network of community-based “Bread Houses” around the

world, and now she plans to start one in the Princeton area.

In 2009, when Savova inherited her great-grandmother’s house in Gabrovo, Bulgaria, the house was in ruins. Working for UNESCO at the time, she was developing the [International Council for Cultural Centers \(I3C\)](#). She wanted to use the house as a community cultural center, but it was dilapidated with a collapsed roof, and Savova found that there was little interest.

An avid bread maker, Savova always felt, from the very first loaf she made, that the sculpture-like making of bread is one of the most universally appealing creative endeavors. Savova’s revelation was to launch an experiment and turn her great-grandmother’s house into a bread house. And once she announced to her town, “Let’s bake bread together,” she was amazed at how quickly everything fell into place.

In one week, someone volunteered to build the bread oven, another person agreed to



rebuild the beams, someone painted the walls, and someone else supplied the Sardinian furniture, all accomplished in zero-degree winter weather. The resulting Bread House Cultural Center is an associated member of I3C and a combination of community bakery and cultural center, where participants can engage in art projects while the bread is baking in a traditional fire oven.



Bread making is so elemental, says Savova, that everyone wants to do it. When people get together to make bread, she says, children teach adults, men teach women, and it changes relationships, with people making jokes and friendships. “There are very few foods,” says Savova, “that cross boundaries so well.”

By attending international conferences and meetings, Savova soon inspired other organizations to start Bread Houses in their own countries. The Bread House puts into practice Savova’s model of community bread-making and the arts.

Savova says, “In a mere year-and-half, the Bread Houses Network has grown to include programs in 12 countries on 5 continents: Brazil, Bulgaria, Egypt, Italy, Israel, Korea, Peru, Romania, Russia, South Africa, and the UK. And now we are working on the development of a Bread House right here in New Jersey.”

The Bread House strives to foster religious dialogue and cooperation among different generations, professional and ethnic groups, as all participants knead their dough together around the same table. While the bread is baking, people share their artistic talents, from poetry and music to theater and sewing. The goal is to encourage people to reach their creative potential and, rather than become mired in local problems, help one another move forward.

One of the programs to come out of the Gabrovo Bread House Cultural Center is the Theater of Crumbs. This new method of theater combines Puppet Theater with bread-making and cooking for the audience and actors together. The Theater of Crumbs program is spreading quickly to the other Bread Houses.

Turkey is even planning a Bread House at a prison, where prisoners will be making bread side-by-side with the guards.

In 2010, on Global Terra Madre Network Day, the Bread Houses Network was recognized by [Slow Food International](#) as an Exemplary Global Model of Food-Related Community-Building.

Savova plans to establish a Bread House for the Princeton community. Raoul Momo, co-owner of Terra Momo with his brother Carlo, met Savova at a bread-making workshop run by Princeton University Slow Food. Raoul saw enormous potential in the Bread Houses Network, and when he heard that Savova planned to launch a New Jersey Bread House after finishing her PhD in December, he decided that they would support her in starting one in Princeton.

Along with Jeff Nathanson of the Arts Council of Princeton, they are looking for locations, as well as giving Savova space to run her [bread making workshop at Eno Terra on October 18](#). “A Bread House,” says Raoul, “is multigenerational and brings the community together. Nadia has identified the most basic art form to get people using their hands and having fun, and it can also be used for team building.”

Raoul feels that their own bakery, Witherspoon Bread, performs the same role for Terra Momo.

As Carlo Momo phrases it, “How many activities can you think of that cross gender, race, and age boundaries?”

The Momo brothers are trying to help Nadia with logistics and hopefully corporate sponsors. “Nadia’s vision for the Bread House is global,” says Carlo. “It doesn’t take a village, it takes an oven, or rather, the oven creates the village.”

According to Dr. Lisa Bilsky, whose PhD is in German Culture and Literature, the communal bread house is a concept that is centuries old. “In medieval villages, there would be one oven in the town or market square,” she says, “and families would bring their dough to bake. An identifying mark would be cut into the top of the loaf so that when it finished baking, they would know it was their loaf.”

If you would like to be a part of this ancient tradition and make bread with Nadezda Savova and other folks in the Princeton community, come to her bread-making workshop at [Eno Terra on October 18th](#), at 6 pm. You **must** call Eno Terra for reservations at 609.497.1777. The fees are \$10 for students and \$20 for adults, with all income going to support the Bread Houses Network.

About the Author »**Bonnie Schultz**

Bonnie Schultz has worked as a technology and marketing writer in the Boston area. She moved here in 1997 and is the mother of two boys. Since 2007, Bonnie has been blogging about food and community happenings in the Princeton area.

RELATED TERMS: Gabrovo Bulgaria Family Relation Person Communication Baking Bread Carlo Momo Entertainment Food and drink Gastronomy Kneading Princeton University Raoul Momo Savova Staple foods Technology Terra Momo United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

Google Videos Like This »powered by 

[Baking](#) [Bread](#) [Entertainment](#) [Food and drink](#) [Gastronomy](#) [Kneading](#)
[Princeton University](#) [Savova](#) [Staple foods](#) [Technology](#)

[LATEST NEWS](#) | [TOWN TALK](#) | [RESOURCES](#) | [EVENTS](#) | 

[Advertise](#) [About Us](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Privacy Policy](#)

Powered by [Phase2 Technology](#)