



Law and Bread Baking

Skills and Professional Development



What do law and bread baking have in common? Absolutely nothing. Isn't it wonderful?

If you have read my columns over the last year, you probably noticed that I've been on a journey of personal development and introspection. After listening to motivational speakers and peak performance experts, I broke a wooden board with my bare hands. I mapped out 30-day, 60-day, 90-day, and year-long goals. I bought a new goal-oriented planner. I picked out my ["word of the year,"](#) (albeit in March). Thanks to Marie Kondo, I have discovered [The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up](#). I have [analyzed my habits](#) with Gretchen Rubin, ["dared greatly"](#) with Brené Brown, and ["cultivated what matters"](#) with Lara Casey. As a result, I am invigorated, excited, inspired, and exhausted.

As enjoyable as my personal growth experience has been, I realized that I needed to do something that didn't require a strategic plan, a roadmap, or a task list. I was so engaged in the pursuit of my goals that I became consumed with "moving the needle." While perusing one of the many goal planning websites I have a habit of frequenting, I stumbled across a recipe for ["No Knead Dutch Oven Bread."](#) My interest was piqued. I love homemade bread. However, after a couple of unsuccessful attempts many years ago left a bad taste in my mouth (pun-intended), I limited my baking repertoire to cakes, pies, and the occasional biscuit.

After reading multiple versions of the recipe online, the reviews indicated that anyone could produce this beautiful, crusty loaf of delicious bread. Encouraged, I assembled my ingredients and mixed the yeast, water, salt, and flour into a happy bowl of sticky dough; sealed it tightly with plastic wrap; and retired for the night. The next morning, I was thrilled to see the dough had doubled in size. So far, so good. Next, I punched the dough, shaped it into a ball, and let it sit for 30 minutes. Have you ever noticed how time seems to crawl when you have to wait for something else to happen? Finally, everything was ready for me to place the bread in the oven. I made a point to busy myself so I did not anxiously watch the kitchen timer.

While I caught up on some bills and checked my email, the most wonderful aroma began to fill the house. My heart began to race and my mouth salivated. My husband wandered downstairs, drawn in by the smell. The oven timer beeped. I opened the oven, lifted the pot lid, and exclaimed “We need to open a bakery!” Had you seen the beautiful, crusty, and perfectly golden loaf that I saw, I think you would have shared my excitement. It was as delicious as it was beautiful. Slicing off two pieces still warm, I spread it thick with butter — which melted instantly. The resounding crunch in that first bite gave me a sense of accomplishment that I had not felt in some time.

Now that you are craving some fresh baked bread, you are probably wondering: “What does this have to do with the practice of law?” As I stated earlier — absolutely nothing. As in-house counsel, our daily lives consist of rapid paced meetings, research, planning, drafting, and fire-fighting. Everything we do is part of a continuum. It is unheard of to have any project that begins and ends in the course of a day. In fact, most items that cross our desk ultimately create days, if not weeks or months, of additional work for us. It’s what we signed up for when we chose this career path. Many of us have experienced great satisfaction and success in the role we play in our organizations.

Perhaps once in a while, instead of reading, drafting, meeting, reviewing, defending, and planning, I think we just need to make something. We need the satisfaction of working with our hands to produce something tangible — something that doesn’t require anyone else to comment, review, or approve.

Put your hands to work just a little bit and you will be amazed at how it frees your mind.

What can you do to free your mind today: plant a garden, build a shelf, redecorate a room, or even bake a loaf of bread?

Whatever you choose, savor it and in the unforgettable words of Julia Child:

“Bon appetit!”

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