



Photos: Mestemacher GmbH

## Pumpernickel for the world

**What initially started out as a city baker has evolved over time into a company for bread specialities based on Westphalian pumpernickel, which is currently represented in more than 80 countries. Mestemacher, based in Gütersloh, is celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2021.**

The Mestemacher industrial bakery's history began in 1871, the year in which the German Reich was founded. At the end of the Franco-Prussian War, Wilhelm I was crowned as the German Emperor in the Hall of Mirrors of the Palace of Versailles. And in Gütersloh, the master shoemaker, Johann Heinrich Mestemacher, set up a bakery for his 20-year-old son and master baker, Wilhelm.

After more than 35 years as a city baker, Wilhelm Mestemacher founded a special bakery for pumpernickel in 1910. His decision to do so was based on the good market prospects for this wholemeal bread made from rye flour, which had become known far beyond the borders of Westphalia in the 19th century and was considered a coveted delicacy in the city households of wealthy families.

### From Mestemacher to Detmers

He had good hopes of expecting additional buyer groups from supporters of the life reform movement. The movement emerged at the end of the 19th century and criticised the negative effects on mankind brought about by industrialisation, calling for a return to "natural" forms of life. This also included a wholefood diet. Wilhelm Mestemacher passed away in 1911. His wife, Sofie, then assumed responsibility for the company's management and successfully led it through the First World War. At the beginning of 1936, she bequeathed the pumpernickel bakery to her sons Paul and Heinrich. After Paul's death, his wife, Katharina, joined the company as a partner. Heinrich Mestemacher passed away in 1943.



The founders and spouses Wilhelm and Sophie Mestemacher

After the Second World War, the company founder's granddaughter, Lore Mestemacher, and her future husband, Willy Schittenhelm, picked up the reins of the company management. At the age of 70, together with their two sons, they took the decision to sell it, because the sons did not wish to take over the business. In 1985, Mestemacher GmbH passed into the hands of the Detmers family of bakers, whose origins date back to Bielefeld-Jöllenbeck in 1904. Together, Albert Detmers, Prof Dr Ulrike Detmers and Fritz Detmers have been running the business in cooperation with external managing directors ever since.

In 1985, the total turnover was 3.2 million euros. In 2019, the total turnover of the Mestemacher Group was already 166 million euros.

The family business' growth is the result of health-oriented wholemeal breads, Westphalian pumpernickel and international bread specialities. When stored unopened, all of Mestemacher's bread varieties remain fresh for up to 180 days. Thanks to its optimal nature, the hearty bread specialities are perfect for sale at home and abroad.



The residential and commercial building 1954



The business premises 1970

Photo: Gütersloh city archive



Photo: Michael B. Bigos

The managing directors, Albert and Fritz Detmers, in front of a computer-controlled malt mill in 1991



Mestemacher is the market leader in this segment worldwide and exports to more than 80 countries across the globe. The baked specialities are sold by German and international food retailers as self-service packages. In Germany, the retailers that are supplied include the Edeka Group, the Rewe Group, Kaufland, Metro, Globus, Hit, and Tegut.

The company is the first producer of packaged wholemeal breads from controlled organic cultivation and supports the existence and operational growth of organic farmers.

**Ecological and Socially Committed**

Ever since the first production in the Gütersloh bakery, with its own large mill, new delicious flavours have been developed every year.

Mestemacher has been an active player in Germany for many years, with a number of social projects aimed at promoting equality between men and women in society and the compatibility of work and family life, in accordance with the Scandinavian model. Several prizes are awarded each year, for example to the "Manager of the Year" and the "Top Father of the Year".

**The current executive board: Marta Glowacka, Prof Dr Ulrike Detmers, Fritz Detmers, Anita Bruns-The-dieck, Albert Detmers, Käthi Penner and Kim Folmeg (f.i.t.r.)**

Taken together, all these activities serve to strengthen Mestemacher's perception among relevant customer groups and, last but not least, boost the sales numbers and market share.  
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