

# BUILT FOR THE FUTURE

With three sister bakeries and a family orientation, Bakery Humanity stakes its claim in the Canadian and American markets.

BY JOANIE SPENCER

In Quebec, Canada, **Bakery Humanity** is a new name. However, its brands — **Maison Isabelle, Boulangerie Dumas and Aliments 2000** — are classics. And the company's president, Dominique Bohec, is an industry veteran whose experience goes back to his childhood working at La Petit Bretonne, the Quebec-based commercial bakery owned and operated by Bohec's family.

These industry roots became the foundation of Bohec's vision for a new kind of company ... one that focuses on respect for employees, the environment and society.

A master baker and certified pastry chef, Bohec first acquired Maison Isabelle, a small producer of cookies and loaf cakes, in 2016 as a side project while also leading international sales for the family business. But when the COVID-19 pandemic swept across North America, Bohec's perspective changed, and he took the entrepreneurial leap to leave behind a lifetime at La Petit Bretonne and pursue his dream of building Bakery Humanity.

"I left to follow my vision and my passion," Bohec said.

**The first step** was merging Maison Isabelle with Boulangerie Dumas, a manufacturer of croissants and puff pastry, with backing from Champlain Group, a Quebec-based investment firm.

The third company welcomed into the fold was Les Aliments 2000, which makes fully baked pizzas, crusts, frozen dough balls and raw-dough pie.

"We have a vision to consolidate bakeries in Canada," Bohec said, noting that Bakery Humanity is first focused on growth through acquisition of small- to mid-size bakeries. The goal is to build a group that uses its respect-based values to create a sustainable business model ... thus the name Bakery Humanity.

In addition to developing a values-based corporate culture, Bakery Humanity has set its sights on dominating the super-market freezer case.

"My group and I have a vision for more acquisition in this market," Bohec said. "Inside that frozen door, you find some puff pastry, pie dough or pizza balls. We want to create a one-stop shop. That's our goal."

---

**"I grew up in a bakery, and I know that every job — every single employee — is important. The people who are putting croissants in the bag are the ones paying our salaries."**

Dominique Bohec |  
president | Bakery Humanity

---

— Right

Leading the way with its frozen laminated dough products, Boulangerie Dumas is helping Bakery Humanity dominate the freezer case.



**Dums**

**ORIGINAL**

**6 vol-au-vent  
pastry shells**

ALIMENTS PRÉPARÉS  
AU QUÉBEC

**160g**

SOURCE  
**OMEGA  
3-6**

**9 vol-au-vent  
pastry shells**

**240g**

SOURCE  
**OMEGA  
3-6**

---

## BAKERY HUMANITY

Currently, overall frozen sales including private-label programs account for about 80% of Bakery Humanity's total business, with the remaining 20% focused on fully baked croissants, puff pastry and loaf cakes.

**Bringing together a vision of sustainable business** with a strategy for leading the freezer case requires serious innovation. This is a key platform for the company, with product development in areas such as vegan and other plant-based dough products like pizza dough balls and raw-dough pies.

For the Bakery Humanity brands, innovation is more about incremental growth and development rather than skyrocketing straight to the top. Slow and steady wins the race, and it can also thoughtfully refine an operation.

"What we are trying to do is become better step by step," Bohec said. "We'll never be 100% perfect; no one is perfect.

---

**"What we are trying to do is become better step by step. We'll never be 100% perfect; no one is perfect. But what we can do is understand every step we're taking to become better every day."**

Dominique Bohec |  
president | Bakery Humanity

---

But what we can do is understand every step we're taking to become better every day."

**This requires staying on top of consumer habits** that have significantly evolved over the past 18 months. Prior to the pandemic, Canadian consumer trends centered around health and wellness. But, similar to other developed areas of the world, home baking and indulgence and comfort went through the roof. As COVID numbers began to wane, health-and-wellness trended upward again. But when the next wave of the pandemic hit, more lockdowns brought back that desire to indulge.

"We got back to reality a little last summer, and everyone hit the gym," Bohec recalled. "But then COVID came back, and it was sugar, sugar, sugar all over again."

Watching the pendulum swing has inspired the Bakery Humanity team's



Photo courtesy of Bakery Humanity

The Dumas plant currently houses one line for croissants and puff pastry with plans to break the bakery into new product development.

## BAKERY HUMANITY

hybrid approach to product development with high-quality, indulgent products that also tout healthy attributes. This is where new products like vegan pies come into play, as well as a heightened focus on plant-based ingredients.

**The better-for-you mindset** doesn't apply strictly to food consumption. Bohec also engages a holistic approach to efficiency as opposed to simply looking at operations as dollars and cents. For example, the traditional view of efficiency identifies wasted product as money lost. But, according to Bohec, this mindset no longer resonates with today's workforce, who often want to understand how their jobs impact the greater good.

"When I was young working in my father's bakery, he would tell me, 'That croissant on the floor cost us 5 cents,'" Bohec recalled. "Today, if I say that to my employees, they don't understand. But if I tell them it's creating pollution because we have to make more product, which requires more flour to be brought in by trucks, and it takes more electricity to run the equipment, that means something to them. When you bring this mentality into your bakery, you'll be more efficient, make more profit and be better to the environment."

These types of efficiencies are also considered in the packaging areas of the bakery plants, especially as Canadian regulations have plastic under intense scrutiny. Earlier this year, Bakery Humanity formed a task force to develop ideas for reducing packaging and improving the company's carbon footprint.

"We have some pretty cool ideas coming, but it is a challenge," Bohec said.

Some immediate solutions have included tapping into robotic technology such as in the Dumas plant. "For every potential packaging investment, we have to consider moving into better packaging with not only less plastic but also plastic that is better for the planet," said Isabelle Pratte, VP of operations and integration for Bakery Humanity.

**Although the bakeries are different** from one another, these sister companies function much like siblings do: Each one has its own distinct personality while, at the same time, serving the same purpose of fulfilling Bakery Humanity's mission.

"In the beginning the bakeries were totally different, but now we have a great synergy that brings out the best in each business to help them all improve," Pratte said. "Many ingredients are similar, as well as the production lines. We want to come together so we can use one another's strengths to improve not only production but also areas such as purchasing, sales, administration and personnel."

One ERP system operationally ties the three facilities together for tracking all production numbers within a larger context. This enables the company to identify which facility is operating the most efficiently and what systems should be emulated everywhere. Because each brand creates its own distinct products through specific operations, a single



With high flexibility on the line, Maison Isabelle creates a wide variety of loaf cakes.

Photo courtesy of Bakery Humanity

---

## BAKERY HUMANITY

ERP system allows Humanity to compare the three to one another, rather than likening “apples” with “oranges.”

“The base always remains the same with quantifiable and qualifiable objectives,” Pratte said. “We rely on visual systems that provide a general outline to each bakery’s leaders to easily indicate where the needs are. The leaders can then designate the proper resources to meet those needs.”

**Boulangerie Dumas** is the largest plant at 39,600 square feet. Although it currently has just one laminated line to make frozen and baked products, it uses robotic automation to manufacture them at 1,000 kilos (approximately 2,200 lbs.) per hour. That said, Bakery Humanity recently invested \$4 million in a second makeup line from Canol that will be dedicated to running laminated frozen dough products. The installation is scheduled for within the next year, and the plant also has a planned expansion of about 15,000 square feet, for which it will partner with Cominar Construction.

---

**“In the beginning the bakeries were totally different, but now we have a great synergy that brings out the best in each business to help them all improve.”**

Isabelle Pratte |  
VP, operations and integration | Bakery Humanity

---

In addition to the makeup line, the Dumas expansion includes a new Groupe Sinox bulk flour delivery system, which has a silo, sieve, air blowers and piping, as well as Leclerc technology to accompany the robotics that Dumas engineered internally about 10 years ago. Leclerc will act as an integrator between the older equipment and the new installation.

While this operation focuses on croissants and puff pastry, the upgrades here will support future product development that will not only take Boulangerie Dumas into the US market but also create brand new, non-traditional pastry items with the same consistent quality.



“We are always consistent with the quality of our pastry shell,” Pratte said. “Our process ensures that it’s always flaky, and this equipment will ensure the quality of our new products.”

**Meanwhile, the Aliments 2000 plant** is a federally certified facility for Canadian pizza production with four lines and two inside silos.

The bakery produces frozen pizza dough balls and pressed crusts, raw-dough pies, and fully finished pizzas that are baked in a hearth oven. The lines are smaller than the Dumas line, but this outfit is fully automated.

While Aliments 2000 is a player in private-label pizza products in the Canadian market, Humanity currently does not have plans for crossing south of the Canadian border. “We want to go national, but not in the US,” Bohec said.

But that’s only the plan for Aliments’ private-label finished pizza brand, Pate 2000. Other pies, however, are a different story. The bakery is breaking into the vegan market, which is growing in Canada as well as the US.

“We are the only Canadian manufacturer doing vegan raw pie,” Pratte noted.

## BAKERY HUMANITY

Additionally, Aliments is gaining momentum with pizza balls as well as thick pizza crusts with ambient temperature packaging.

**Similar to Dumas**, Aliments 2000 is also innovating with tangential product development. This bakery also recently invested in a new tortilla line, and the operation is gearing up to produce filled tacos. Being federally regulated for meat production, Aliments 2000 developed a new finished taco filled with chicken and other meats that the bakery is producing for one customer.

"We don't manufacture the whole product just yet," Bohec said. "But right now, we are filling it. This is just another area where we want to go, and we can integrate the taco production on the new line."

In the spirit of a family-like culture, Bakery Humanity will tap into the Aliments 2000 meat production capabilities for product development with Dumas.

"Across the bakeries, we are fully integrated," Bohec said. "We can make puff pastry filled with meats and have a unique product that is fully controlled from the first step to the last."

Streamlined innovation inside this bakery that runs five days a week with two production shifts — plus a third shift for sanitation — will fast-track Bohec's vision of a diverse portfolio inside the freezer case.

"We want to be inside that frozen door with product innovation like this," Bohec said, suggesting that integrating the two bakeries for filled products creates opportunities such as frozen breakfast. With production output up by about 35% in the past two months, the bakery is well on its way.

**Then there is Maison Isabelle.** The smallest of the three bakeries, it's Bakery Humanity's first operation and arguably the most nimble.

Although this facility houses only one line, it's also home to the company's only tunnel oven, and equipment innovation inside this plant is a mixture of supplier-developed and home-grown, including depositing equipment that was designed in-house.

A few years ago, Maison Isabelle invested in Ultrason ultrasonic slicing technology (the second one for this operation) that throughputs nearly 1,000 loaf cakes per hour.

**Despite the speed and size** — the total square footage here is roughly the size of the expansion at Dumas — flexibility is the gold standard at Maison Isabelle.

"At this plant, especially versus other loaf cake plants, we're baking the same product with different flavors that we can pack," Bohec said.

"The line may be slower, but we can pack two or three flavors with the same pack. That's unique in Canada, and we're very efficient with it. That's why we're leading the market on sliced loaf cakes."

### —Below

Bakery Humanity's strategy for Aliments 2000 includes national growth in the Canadian market.



Photo courtesy of Bakery Humanity

---

## BAKERY HUMANITY

**This bakery is also busy** developing a new plant-based line of loaf cakes launching this month. Because the operation does not use mixes or bases, R&D is critical for a successful product launch.

“It’s complicated to process a cake batter with several small ingredients,” Bohec explained. “It’s tough to do just one cake, but when you do thousands per hour, it’s even harder.”

Because the US loaf cake market is relatively saturated, and this product accounts for about 20% of Bakery Humanity’s overall sales, the strategy is focusing on leading the Canadian market with new products such as birthday-cake varieties and a licensing agreement with Sun Maid.

“One day we might be the biggest player in loaf cakes in Canada,” Bohec suggested. “But that won’t happen without organically growing through acquisition.”

**Bakery Humanity is a new company**, but it’s flourishing out of deep industry roots, and that is creating unlimited potential.

“We want to be a platform with more than \$100 million in sales,” Bohec said, noting his aggressive timeline with plans to break a new brand — Chef Dumas — into the US market.

For distribution purposes, production stateside is a must, and acquisition is an efficient strategy in the post-pandemic landscape. Then again, US production won’t happen before the company increases capacity in Canada first. And Bohec still has a few tricks up his sleeve with acquisition targets on his home turf.

Regardless of how Bakery Humanity grows, or how many new bakeries join the family, Bohec will not forget his first goal.

“We respect our employees no matter how we integrate,” he said. “This is the key: Make sure our employees enjoy what we’re doing. If they don’t, we can’t succeed. I grew up in a bakery, and I know that every job — every single employee — is important. The people putting croissants in the bag are the ones paying our salaries.”

**Although Bohec said farewell** to the bakery he grew up in, he is bringing those same family values into the future.

“When I created Bakery Humanity, I wanted it to be a big family,” Bohec said. “The family business was my past life, but it’s still what I wanted to create for my company. I don’t work with my dad anymore, but we are all connected here, and it still feels like I’m creating a family business.”

And who knows? Perhaps Bohec will be reunited with his roots one day. For this company set on changing the game, anything is possible. **CB**

---

## INNOVATIONS FROM THE BAKERY FLOORS

Bakery Humanity has a strategy of growth through acquisition, and the first three bakeries to join the family bring different products to the group, all with Bakery Humanity’s commitment to quality. These are some of the innovations that can be seen throughout the three facilities.

**Canol** laminating line

**Comas** dough press

**Fanuc** robotics

**Leclerc Robotique** integration, automation and conveyors

**Picard** ovens

**Refrigeration Jacques Guay** air conditioning

**Rondo** pastry makeup

**Shanklin** shrink tunnel

**ADM** flour

**Angropur** butter

**Bunge** shortening

**Christian Pellerin** oils

**Groupe Prestige** ingredient procurement

**Margarine Thibault** shortening, margarine

