



Harvest Day at Fritz Durst's Farm



Two weeks ago, in the high heat, we visited [Fritz Durst's farm](#) to watch the wheat brought in with our friend and baker, Josey Baker of [The Mill](#) in San Francisco.

A passionate advocate for no-till methods, Fritz hadn't tilled this particular field in ten years. "If we cultivate," he explained, "rainfall won't soak into the soil, and it runs off instead, carrying nutrients. If we till even once, it reverses the work of the gypsum and poultry manure we amended the soil with last fall." With his no-till method, straw is left in the field from the previous harvest. It protects the soil, allowing the rain to enter it gently. It took years of trial and error — finding the right machinery, the right methods — to discover the best way to avoid tilling in his fields.

It's best to harvest on hot, dry days. If it's too damp, the kernels — the wheatberries that are ground into flour — won't pop properly out of

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Fritz's combine has become our beloved mascot, and we feature it, beautifully illustrated by Molly McCoy, right on the back of our pasta boxes.

because "it likes what we do — how we plant, how we harvest." Growing Patwin begins three years before harvest, because it takes that long to order the seed, to have the seed company plant the acres of wheat from which the seed is harvested, and finally, to receive the seed and begin planting.

It's always a good idea for us to see Fritz, to see the wheat heads in the sun and the combine cutting across the field in its slow, boat-like way. When you can crumble a stalk of wheat in your hand, rub the pebbly berries between your fingers, what is understood mentally can finally be experienced: flour is a plant-based food — a whole food, when whole milled and unsifted — and the farmer is the one that feeds you.

their shells. As hot as it was, it was still cool in the combine. It hovered over the sea of wheat, trying to stay level over the hills so that the wheat could be properly sifted and cleaned.

Every few hours or so, the cleaned wheat is offloaded into a truck and brought to a nearby storage facility.

For Community Grains, Fritz grows Patwin — a variety bred by UC Davis —

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