



TRIBUNE PHOTO BY DAVID MIDDLECAMP

Sheila McCann pours a bag of chemical-free wheat into her stone wheat grinder to make flour for some bread at House of Bread in San Luis Obispo. McCann said she has seen an increase in wheat bread sales since people started counting carbs.

# Surviving the carb craze

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Co-owner of  
Firestone Walker  
Brewery

From beer and beef to smoothies and baked goods, Central Coast business owners are still profiting

By CYNTHIA NEFF  
THE TRIBUNE

The weight-loss regimen made popular by the late Dr. Robert Atkins is forcing a few San Luis Obispo County businesses to offer low-carb alternatives.

The diet rich in meat, eggs and cheese but devoid of grains, potatoes and fruit has become an obsession that has seeped into American culture and put everything from colas to pastas on supermarket shelves in reduced-carbohydrate varieties.

Firestone Walker Brewery co-owner David Walker said he produced a low-carb beer for Trader Joe's, though sales of his regular beer haven't declined.

"For your boutique brewer — Firestone, Sierra Nevada — dealing with small-end market, demographic changes on a large level really don't affect us," he said. "I don't think it's a passing fad but I'm not worried."

Jamba Juice in April introduced "Enlightened Smoothies," a low-cal-

orie, lower-carbohydrate alternative, said Mary Elyse Craft, assistant manager of the Chorro Street store in San Luis Obispo.

But the smoothies were not created to meet the current demands of people on the Atkins diet, she said.

"We for years have had requests from customers for a reduced-calorie, low-carb smoothie," Craft said. "It just happened to come out at the same time" as promotions for low-carbohydrate products increased.

The new smoothies are gaining in popularity, she said, especially as summer approaches.

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## Carbs

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Sheila McCann, House of Bread founder, said she's seen a change in what types of breads people are buying.

Sales of wheat bread rose about 1.3 percent, or 765 two-pound loaves, from 2002 to 2003, while sales of white bread dropped about 2 percent, or 450 two-pound loaves — a differ-

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owner of Carlock's Bakery

market reaction — a windfall to an industry that has long struggled to defend itself against negative publicity.

"We're seeing these prices getting to a point where we can actually make money and make

Arroyo Grande Bakery owner Marc Lossing said the low-carbohydrate craze hasn't affected his business.

"We have had a few people ask for low-carb breads, but people who've eaten them agree that they don't taste as good," Lossing said, adding the few different low-carbohydrate recipes he tested didn't make the shelves.

"Basically they (people) come here for the taste," said Gary