



ACTUALITÉS
TENDANCES
NOUVEAUX PRODUITS
INNOVATIONS & SAVOIR-FAIRE



Three generations, Jean-Pierre Martin with Alexis, his grandson, and Bruno, his son.

BAUMALU ON THE RISE

On a sun-kissed day, the Home Fashion News team travelled to Baldenheim, Alsace to visit the offices of Baumalu. Having taken over the site of an old fruit cooperative since 1971, the company's portfolio comprises of locally-made copper cookware as well as products made of aluminium, enamel, stainless steel and cast-iron under the Baumalu and Cuivres de France brands both of which are now gaining international renown.



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Before founding Baumalu, Jean-Pierre Martin worked in the regional textile industry before its collapse. Following this, the opportunity to take over a local cookware business presented itself. « At first, we started with a couple of machines, » he says. « We made aluminium pans, but copper products followed three years later. Aluminium was losing steam and using copper was more profitable. » When his son, Bruno, joined the company thirty-five years ago, they were still using old barns as storage space. Once they had filled their sixth barn, the father and son team decided to build their first storage facility, followed by a second in 1999 and a third in 2003. The factory store opened its doors in 2008. Today, Baumalu resides on a 10,000 m² site, including a thirteen-meter high storage facility that stores twice as many products.

Despite this growth, the company's manufacturing process was never automated and staff are still involved at every stage of production to guarantee the adherence to the technical, aesthetic and qualitative criteria.

Baumalu is a very much a family affair: Marine, the daughter of Bruno Martin, joined the company two years ago while Alexis, her brother, is finishing an internship during which he created the company's website and continues his work as a professional photographer.

The company now employs forty people, a figure that can increase depending on incoming orders. The influx of international orders also allows Baumalu to hire temporary workers.

« Things have changed a lot, » says Jean-Pierre Martin, who, at eighty years old, still comes to the company daily to 'watch the young people work without



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bothering them.' «Up until the 1980s, we had trouble hiring people. Skilled workers were very much in demand but most preferred to work across the border in Germany, where wages were higher. We organized a pickup service which allowed us to ensure employee transport.»

The strength of copper

Producing saucepans, frying pans, casseroles and jam pans, Baumalu has been able to scale their copper production to an industrial scale and now manufactures more than 100,000 pieces of cookware each year on their factory floor.

The most upmarket products include their Cuivres de France collection while the more basic products are marketed as Baumalu or under partners' names, allowing the brand to put their handcrafted copper products into the hands of the largest possible client base.

Even though copper was not company's commercial priority until recently, Baumalu is now willing to emphasize this range and develop their local and international distribution to meet the growing demand. To bring this to life, the company relies on the expertise of their sales team: **Hubert Throo** and **Florence Mairesse**, who joined the company a few months ago from Le

Creuset as head of key accounts and export. «Copper is becoming a trend again and means of manufacturing are still evolving so we will follow suit in developing our production and distribution means,» explains **Bruno Martin**, current head of the company.

«We specialise in industrial handcrafting: each product is handmade, piece by piece. That said, over the next few months, we will be investing in modernizing our aging equipment with the arrival of digital machines that have become necessary to standardise production and further improve quality.»

These plans are part of an overall project to develop the Baumalu and Cuivres de France brands. Besides the teams' passion for mastering lost know-how, design, brand positioning, range expansion, in-store implementation, product end of life management and ecology are at the heart of the company's concerns.

To prepare for the future, Baumalu can count on its youngest employees who are learning the profession from veterans who are proud to present their decades of experience.

«Our craftsmen's gestures aren't taught in any school. We have a duty to educate the next generation and ensure the continuity of our activity,» says **Jean-Pierre Martin**, who is rightfully frustrated by



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Florence Mairesse

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the widening gap between the training offered to novices and the actual needs of French companies.

«Given the current situation, it is unfortunate to see that companies are having so much trouble recruiting skilled workers. In the midst of the country's deindustrialisation, France has neglected its technical sectors in favour of university education that does not always lead to employment,» he points out.

Copper: More than a trend, a product of the future?

With a renewed interest in copper in recent years, Baumalu is seeing an increase in demand for the category. This is especially evident among its international clientele who are attracted by the company's know-how, and multiple product ranges that satisfy the market as a whole.

«We sell a lot of copper cookware internationally, especially to the United States. For Americans, copper is a symbol of fine French cuisine. We are planning for this trend's ongoing growth and how to grow with it,» explains **Florence Mairesse**, who is confident in the future developments of Baumalu and Cuivres de France.

«The company's strengths are immense; we just need to know how to cultivate and develop them. We are working on projects that will improve product quality and range expansion, which will allow us to compete with the market's big brand names.»

In this small family business, decisions are made quickly and Baumalu knows how to be agile and flexible according to customer demand. The manufacturer presented more than 60 new products at Ambiente in Frankfurt last February and intends to bring its numerous new projects to fruition by the end of the year to be at full strength for Ambiente 2020. Besides, Baumalu was also present at this year's Chicago fair, allowing them to make multiple promising contacts...

A sensational but little-known material

Copper has the advantage of being a noble and robust material, ideal for the preparation of jams. An excellent heat conductor, it is highly prized by chefs who use it to achieve exceptional cooking results. However, copper requires a coating for salty preparations. That's why pots and pans are tinned (covered with a layer of tin) to prevent them from turning green. A tin-plated copper pan requires very little maintenance and a lot of tenderness!



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«Everyday cooking with copper requires a minimum of instruction. There are a lot of preconceptions regarding the material: people aren't always aware of its virtues and don't know how to cook in copper. Once understood and the basic skills learned, a chef will rarely part with it. Whether they're amateurs or professionals, there are a huge number of copper fans!» emphasizes Florence Mairesse, speaking about future range expansion projects.

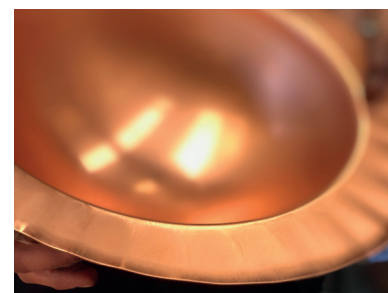
Why are copper basins ideal for making jam?

Cooking in a copper container allows for a denser, less fluid jam. Pectin molecules are naturally present in fruits and are released during the cooking process. These molecules act as a natural gelling agent in the jam but are not contained in sufficient quantities in all fruit to ensure the correct jam consistency. This is where copper comes into play. During cooking, the thin film of copper covering the basin becomes a positively charged ionic solution that interacts with pectin molecules. The bonds between molecules are strengthened and the created network retains the fruit's juice increasing the jam's density. The positive effects of cooking in a copper basin only work if the basin is not tinned - that is to say not plated with tin. Additionally, it's imperative that the copper basin be properly maintained to prevent metal corrosion!

Source: ma-maison-merite-du-cuivre.fr, a site of the ECI - European Copper Institute



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“ Our copper products are 100% French, all the way to the cast-iron handles made in Normandy and assembled in our workshop. ”

Bruno Martin

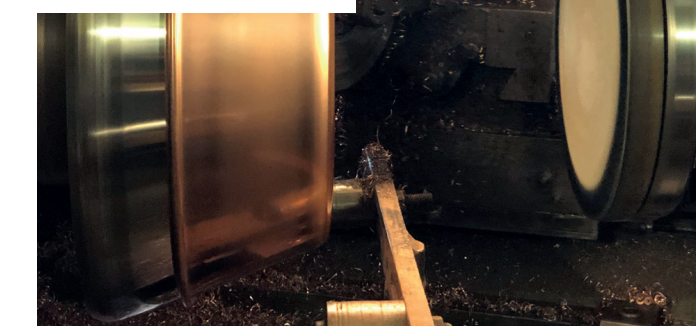
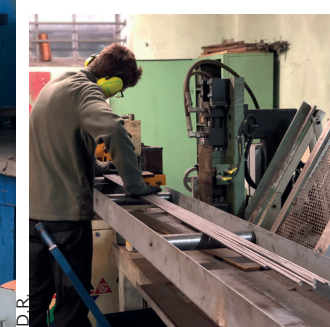
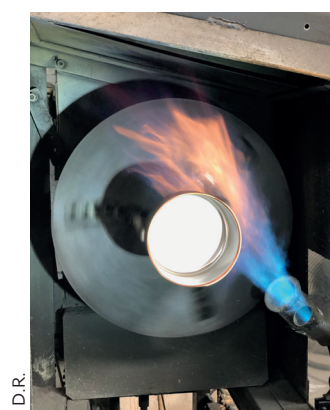


Bruno Martin, current CEO of Baumalu with his children Marine and Alexis in front of the old factory time clock.

Today, Baumalu has a clear vision of its strategy and aims to promote the brand Cuivres de France abroad.

«Beyond increasing the quality of our products, we will develop exclusive technical solutions (induction, lining...) that will allow us to position ourselves as a true professional expert in the manufacture of copper. These more technical and high-end products – on which the company will make less volume, but more value – will help build the brand. This will be accompanied by the creation of a marketing plan for both French and foreign retailers to whom we guarantee French manufacturing that respect our traditions. Thanks to an exceptional means of production, we want to put it to work in the creation of new products to a growing market demand for high-end copper decorative accessories for their kitchen and homes. This move upmarket will be accompanied by a new sourcing strategy that aims to provide our partners with original products that enable them to distinguish themselves in a market saturated with identical objects from one shop to another.»

Baumalu's ambitions are impressive and they are not lacking in projects. That said, Baumalu is aware that there is still some way to go before they reach the stars. ■



AT THE HEART OF BAUMALU'S WORKSHOPS

Visiting Baumalu's factory helps us understand how the brand relies on the know-how of its passionate craftsmen and workers. Thanks to their thirty machines, they make cookware from precious metals which are carefully processed during an invariable manufacturing process, punctuated by numerous quality controls. Here they press, cut, tin, polish and assemble the handles of kitchen products whose durability and high quality are guaranteed, even for entry-level models. Depending on their thickness (the more copper, for example, the more efficient the product) or finish (metal handle, cast iron, etc.), product portfolio is presented for wholesalers and retailers. The best copper cookware belong to Cuivre de France, Baumalu's flagship brand.

Each unit that comes off the factory line can be considered to be a unique piece, having passed through the hands of skilled craftsmen, trained in gestures that are passed down from one generation to the next. Yannick Braun, the foreman who oversees all operations, took over from his father. In his team, Jean, 24, arrived last year and works alongside José who has been riveting for over 30 years and Didier, who has been with the company for 38 years and has mastered the art of manual polishing, considered today as an art craft. The whole process is a theatre-piece of which we see so few today and which shows that France has not lost all its artisanal talents.

