

Excellent Baker badge, by ZhRPT Factory, circa mid- 1940s.

Brass, enamels; 46.5 x 36.3 mm. Unlike many badges of the "WW2 Proficiency Series" that were made in the post-war years, this piece is clearly a WW2 model characterized by relatively domed center medallion, wide scrolls at the top and other features. It is among the first of the Excellent Baker badges produced by the ShE Z-d ZhRPT Factory (Stamping and Enamel Factory of the Railway Repairs and Production Cooperative) immediately after the institution of the badge in March 1943. Among its distinctive ZhRPT details is the top ornament formed by five wide scrolls with wavy upper edge. This particular version however has slight but significant differences from the two other ZhRPT variations shown in the reference guide by Airapetyan /SeeBreast Badges of the Red Army, 1941-1945 , p. 126, fig. 1 and p. 127 fig. 2/. Note especially the absence of the small downward pointing triangle at the bottom of the center scroll in the ornament, which is present on the more common ZhRPT variations, as well as the peculiar, somewhat simplified artwork of the hammer & sickle emblem. A badge with these features is shown in the more comprehensive catalog by Khlamkin (classified as Type 2). The latter book gives this version of the badge highest rarity rating R even in comparison with other versions of the Excellent Baker badge - all of which are quite scarce.

Very fine condition. The enamel on the center medallion and the lower tip of the badge (under the loaves of bread) shows rubbing, small scratches and moderate amount of surface flaking, especially around the hammer & sickle emblem. There are however no repairs or chips penetrating to brass, and the enamel looks very presentable overall. The red enamel in the lower portion of the badge above the bread shows very attractive luster and is practically perfect with the exception of a few microscopic contact marks. The details of the wreath and loaves of bread are well preserved, with nice even toning to the brass. The screw post is original and hasn't been replaced or reattached (the blob of solder around it is the way it came from the factory, as typical of Proficiency badges made during the war). The screw post is full length, measures about 13 mm. The screw plate marked ШЗ 3-д ЖРПТ ("ShE Z-d ZhRPT") is of the period and probably original to the badge.

There were probably far fewer issues of the Baker badge than of any other in the "WW2 proficiency" series. The book Breast Badges of the Red Army by Borisov gives a combined total of 33000 for Excellent Cook and Excellent Baker badges issued both during and after the war. Assuming a 10:1 ratio between army cooks and bakers (an admittedly arbitrary estimate which seems reasonable), we will arrive at 3000 as the approximate number of issues for the Excellent Baker badge. By Soviet standards, this is a tiny number which explains the rarity of original Excellent Baker badges of any kind. Being the rarest version of this award, the example offered here represents an almost unique opportunity for the advanced collector of Soviet badges.

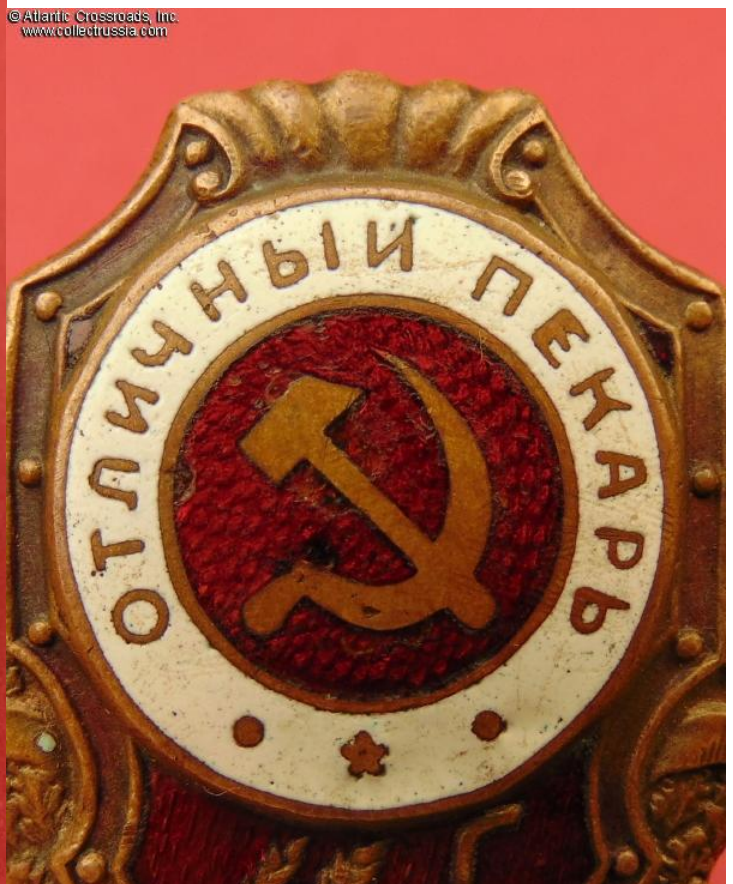
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ОТЛИЧНЫЕ ЗНАКИ ОТЛИЧНИКОВ КРАСНОЙ АРМИИ

Отличный ПЕКАРЬ
Тип 2

Размер (мм): 36,5x47
Гайка с маркировкой: ШЭЗ ЖРПТ
Изготовитель: ШЭЗ ЖРПТ

В каталоге Айрапетяна Б.В.	Степень редкости	Ценовой диапазон (\$)
-	R	1000 - 1200