

Taste Wolverhampton February 2024 Real Bread Week

What is Real Bread Week?

Created and run by the Real Bread Campaign since 2010, #RealBreadWeek is the annual, international celebration of Real Bread and the people behind its rise.

Each year, bakeries, baking schools, mills, schools, care homes, youth and other community groups around the world bake special loaves and run classes and other activities. Meanwhile countless people bake at home, some with their children other family members, colleagues or friends, and take to social media with photos of themselves with loaves they've baked or bought.

What is Real Bread?

The Campaign defines Real Bread as made with all-natural ingredients, and without the use of any processing aids, chemical leavening or other additives. This might sound simple enough (because it is) but sadly something like 95-97% of the loaves sold in Britain fail to reach this ridiculously low bar. Loaves, rolls, flatbreads, pizza bases and more can all be Real Bread...if the baker chooses.

What is sourdough?

Genuine sourdough is Real Bread leavened only using a live sourdough starter culture.

Yeasts and bacteria are present all around us – for example in the air, soil and water. Those well suited to bread production are found in relatively high populations on the surface of cereal grains, such as wheat. By grinding the grains into flour and providing a suitable environment for these microorganisms to thrive (basically by adding water, maintaining an appropriate temperature, and providing food in the form of more flour) these populations can be increased in size and concentration, where they co-exist in a symbiotic relationship.

Say no to sourfaux

In 2015, Real Bread Campaign co-ordinator Chris Young coined the word sourfaux for any product that is named or marketed using the word sourdough but that is made using one or more additives and/or an alternative raising agent (such as baker's yeast or baking powder) in addition to or instead of a live sourdough starter culture.

As the yeast(s) found in a live starter typically produce carbon dioxide at a slower rate than commercial baker's yeast, the rising time is longer. This longer fermentation period allows other changes to occur in the dough that could have benefits other than flavour alone. This is a key reason the Real Bread Campaign's call for an Honest Crust Act includes (amongst other things) legal definition of the word sourdough and regulation of its use.

Buy Real Bread

1. Look for The Real Bread Loaf Mark
2. Find a local Real Bread bakery
3. Support a local Real Bread bakery

Make your own bread

Not only is making Real Bread great fun, it's also a very affordable way of avoiding the cocktail of additives that turn up in industrial loaf products.

Mixing, kneading and shaping dough by hand takes very little of your time, and many people find the process therapeutic.

According to research carried out in 2023 for independent not-for-profit organisation Recycle Your Electricals, there might be around 1.4 million bread machines going unused in UK homes. Rather than asking anyone to shell out for a new machine, the Real Bread Campaign suggests people find a second-hand one from a trusted source, such as a charity shop or a reputable dealer that tests used electricals before selling.

As the cost of the basic ingredients and the energy to run a bread maker are pence, and the skill required to use one is minimal, adopting one is a very affordable and accessible way of more people being able to enjoy Real Bread.

The different types of flour

1. Plain flour

Plain flour (known as All Purpose in America) is a great staple flour often used in bread, biscuits and cookies, pie crusts, and even pizza dough. It is made by blending both soft and hard wheat. Nutrients such as iron and riboflavin are often added after it's milled, as these can be stripped during the process.

2. Self-raising flour

Self-raising flour contains baking powder and salt, which are distributed equally and act as the rising agent. This helps the dough rise without the need for yeast. It's most commonly used in baking cakes, giving the airy, spongy texture.

3. Strong bread flour

Bread flour comes in both white and wholewheat forms and contains more protein than plain flour. Protein produces lots of gluten, which helps create elasticity in the dough, as well as the chewiness found in a well-baked loaf.

4. 00 flour

This is a finely ground Italian flour, used mostly in recipes for thin and light pizza bases and fresh egg pasta.

5. Almond flour

This is one of the most common gluten-free flours. Made from blanching almonds and then grinding them into a fine flour, it has a sweeter taste than other flours. It is often considered a healthier alternative thanks to its rich nutrients like magnesium, protein and vitamin E. Almond flour recipes vary but it can be used in a similar fashion to wheat flour. Being gluten-free, items like bread may be heavy and dense.

6. Gram flour

As a derivative of chickpea flour, gram flour is a suitable flour to use for gluten-free cooking and baking too. It is mainly used in cooking in the Indian subcontinent to coat vegetables for pakoras or to make papadums and flatbreads.

7. Cornflour

This flour is derived from the corn grain and is a popular favourite for thickening sauces or soups. It is made by finely grinding dried corn kernels into fine flour. It is used for thickening sauces and is another gluten-free option to use in cooking or baking.

Other flours, such as spelt flour, can add a different texture and flavour to bakes.

Simple bread recipe

- 500 grams strong bread flour: white, wholemeal, granary or a blend to your preference
- A sachet / 7 grams of easy-bake yeast or equivalent (you can use half with white bread. It tastes a bit better, but takes twice as long to rise).
- 5 grams of salt
- 300 grams (0.3 litre) of lukewarm water

Mix together and knead for around 5 minutes. Leave to rise for 90 minutes or so.

Shape or put in a loaf tin. Leave to rise until doubled – usually a little above the top of the tin. Do not cook until it has doubled in size. The time can vary depending on room temperature, but the loaf will be heavy if you cook too soon.

Bake at 200°C for 30-35 minutes. Remove the loaf from the tin a few minutes after you take it out of the oven. Put on a wire rack to cool.

Read more about Real Bread at <https://www.sustainweb.org/realbread>

Read more about Taste Wolverhampton: <https://www.wcrfm.com/tastewolverhampton>

