



What is Real Bread?

The Earth's Crust Bakery definition:

It is slow

An industrial loaf takes 90 minutes from mixing to a baked loaf. Traditionally crafted bread takes 16-20 hours. This packs it with flavour, gives it natural keeping qualities with no need for additives or preservatives and makes it much more digestible.

It is ethical

All of our flour is certified organic, stoneground and made using grains grown in Britain. We use other organic ingredients whenever possible. We also actively source local ingredients from producers we know.

It is handmade

We take great pride in putting our name to our loaves. As artisan bakers we fold, scale, shape and load all our loaves by hand.



The Real Bread Campaign definition:

Real Bread has nothing to hide. The only essential ingredients of bread are:

Flour

Water

Yeast

Salt

(cultured or natural)

(small amount)

This is our definition of basic Real Bread that is accessible to all.

Additional ingredients are great as long as they are natural (e.g. seeds, nuts, cheese, herbs, oils, fats and dried fruits) and contain no artificial additives.

Our gold standard is reached by Real Bread that is made:

- using at least 20% local ingredients*
- with not only refined white flour - the use of stoneground flour
- involving fermentation of at least four hours
- in one continuous process i.e. no part baking or freezing of the dough

The Real Bread Campaign also celebrates the use of certified organic ingredients.

www.sustainweb.org/realbread

Baking Real Bread

Constituent parts and their function

Flour

Wheat flour contains proteins such as gluten which builds up a gluten structure to hold up the bread. The more protein there is in wheat, the more gluten there will be in the dough made from it. Strong (hard) wheat often comes from Canada and produces vertical loaves, but the weaker (softer) European wheat can produce wonderfully aerated breads such as ciabatta or various sourdough breads. Most flour is blended to give characteristics from both.

Water

Activates the yeast and hydrates the flour thus kick-starting the bonding of gluten strands. Water temperature is used to control the speed at which the dough ferments.

Yeast

Feeds off the sugars in the flour (can run out if over-fermented). Along with 'food' it needs moisture, warmth (optimal 25-28 C) and oxygen to activate. Some people argue fresh yeast is best, but most types of dry yeast will work just as well. Sourdough bread is leavened with natural yeast that is present in flour and the atmosphere. As a general rule of thumb, if converting from fresh to dry yeast, halve the stated amount and vice versa.

Salt

Salt of course enhances the flavour of bread, but also gives it colour. Salt tightens the gluten network and can be used to slow down the fermentation process.

Benefits of pre-ferments

A pre-ferment is made by taking a portion of the bread dough's overall ingredients, mixing them together and allowing them to slowly ferment for several hours before mixing the final dough. Typically, pre-ferments ripen between 6 and 18 hours, although in some instances this may be a longer or shorter duration. The correct use of pre-ferments has important benefits, which result from the gradual slow fermentation that occurs during the maturing of the pre-ferment.

1) Dough structure is strengthened. Fermentation develops acidity which has a strengthening effect on the gluten structure.

2) Bread develops superior flavour. Organic acids and esters are a natural product of pre-ferments, which contribute to superior bread flavour.

3) Keeping quality improves. As the pH of a bread increases (= acidity increases) there is a concomitant increase in the keeping quality of the bread with no need for preservatives, thus sourdough breads tend to keep for longer.

4) Overall production time is reduced. To attain the best bread we must allow sufficient time for its development. Straight dough that is mixed and 2 or 3 hours later is in the oven will always lack in character when compared with bread that contains a well-developed pre-ferment. By taking 5-10 minutes today to scale and mix a sponge, a sourdough, a polish or some other pre-ferment, we significantly reduce the length of the bulk fermentation time required tomorrow. The ripe pre-ferment immediately incorporates acidity and organic acids into the final dough, serving to reduce the required bulk-fermentation time after mixing. As a result, the baker can bring bread from the mixer to the oven in substantially less time than when using a straight dough.

5) Health impacts are heightened. The lactic acid bacteria produced in long fermentation can neutralise some of the gliadin that causes wheat allergy and celiac disease. Pre-ferments make bread more digestible. They can enhance the nutritional properties of bread and make certain nutrients more available to the body and lower the glycaemic response to bread, thus benefiting diabetics and people watching their weight.