

Breads From Around the World*

Bread is the world's most widely eaten food and has been part of our diet since the early times of mankind.

Bread making began very simply by grinding grains into flour, adding a liquid to the flour and baking the dough on hot rocks. In some countries families are still making their breads in much the same way using locally grown grains. Thanks to exporting and importing, a greater variety of grains and flours are available for making breads. Today, making bread can be a more involved process and include more ingredients like eggs, yeast, baking powder and flavorings such as salt, herbs, fruits, vegetables and/or nuts.

In many cultures, bread was - and still may be – a symbol of harvest, fruitfulness, and fertility. The term “breaking bread” represents a symbol of peace in some cultures. Bread is used as a symbol in some religions, for example, communion host in Christian faith or a Passover symbol (matzo) in Jewish tradition.

Breads can be made from many grains. Wheat has been used for food for thousands of years as early as 4000 B.C. Ancient Egyptians ground wheat into flour, combined it with liquid, and baked it into bread. Corn has also been around for a long time (tens of thousands of years). It is believed corn migrated from Mesoamerica (a region extending S and E from Central Mexico which includes Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and Nicaragua) along sea and land routes to South America and North America. Rice is native to Asia and was grown and used for food even before records were kept.

BREAD TYPES

Yeast Breads Yeast breads are leavened breads made with yeast. The yeast causes the bread to rise. Most people in the United States, Canada, and in many European countries eat yeast breads. Yeast breads make up about 99 percent of the bread baked in the United States.

Examples: rolls, croissants, pastries, English muffins, crumpets (England), Kugelhopf (Austria and France), brioche (French buns), challah (Jewish braided bread) and loaves of breads.

Quick Breads Quick breads are loaves that do not require any kneading or rising. Most quick breads contain baking soda and/or baking powder that causes the breads to rise when ingredients are mixed and baked.

Examples: corn or banana bread, muffins, biscuits, scones (Scotland), pancakes and waffles.

Flatbreads Flatbreads are more common in other parts of the world than in the United States. Most flatbreads are **unleavened**. They are made from batters or kneaded dough often cooked on a stovetop rather than in an oven.

Examples: tortillas (Mexico), Jewish matzah, crepes (France), chapatis (India), mandarin pancakes (China), okonomiyaki (Japan) and pita bread (Middle East).

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