

## The art and science of bread

**Paul Rhodes**, owner and founder of Paul Rhodes London Bakery, talks about the process of breadmaking.

**PR:** My name's Paul Rhodes, I am the owner and founder of Paul Rhodes London Bakery. We're artisan bakers, everything we produce is handmade and sourced from fine ingredients. Most of our flour does come from France, we take it in one hit every couple of weeks, 30 tonnes at a time. We produce from 2 tonnes of flour a night, which is I think in the region of 5000 loaves. We make everything from your classic tin bread to birthday cakes, morning goods, many hundreds of dinner rolls, and also we make a couple of thousand pastries and different muffins and cakes, brownies, scones, so yes: busy, busy.

As you can see we're all dressed in clean white jackets and we have to scrub down and wear hairnets, so hygiene is a major concern of ours.

Bread's one of the easiest things to make. Four ingredients – flour, water, yeast and salt – and that's the basic raw ingredients.

We sell our product as a daily fresh product, so we don't use any preservatives or improvers. The only stabiliser that we use is extra virgin olive oil. The yeast that we use is fresh yeast, it's manmade, it's to a higher specification for industrial purposes, producing bread on a larger scale, as opposed to the yeast that you might find in a supermarket. Yeast is a living microorganism. Within reason, any temperature you're going to get a form of loaf but yeast thrives on the perfect temperature which is around 24 degrees, 26 degrees. It reacts with the flour and it just develops and grows and puts that lovely bubbles and texture and that's what gives a really nice flavoursome crusty loaf. It's like any fermentation you know, like beer, wine, it's a similar process.

From the machine you get your nice dough, it's then left to rest, the yeast develops, it kind of doubles in size, then we what you call knock the dough back, so you're removing the air. It's then cut and shaped into the finished product, be it a tin, a bloomer, a roll, a baguette, it's allowed to prove again and then on the second prove when it's reached a certain stage or a certain size it's then baked and that's when it goes into the oven.

It's crucial that the temperature's hot. We bake at a very high temperature, 430, 440 degrees Fahrenheit. It's also essential that the temperature is maintained as well through the cooking, so when the bread hits that instant temperature it gets a lift, it kinds of inflates and then you get the final shape and obviously it maintains the temperature so it doesn't drop, and you get this wonderful colour.

Bread is one of the most wonderful staple foods in the world. It's so much fun to make, the first time I made it it was just such an amazing achievement from a bag of white dust to this wonderful creation. It is an art, have fun, get out there and have a go. Get it into the oven and you'll be amazed with the final product.

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