



Unlike many Europeans, we rarely eat bread for itself alone. We use it as a background for other food

...OUR DAILY BREAD

NOT long ago a Connecticut baker of specialty bread received a letter from a customer in Arizona. There was nothing so very unusual about the distance of the customer. Like many specialty bakers this one regularly sends orders to faraway enthusiasts who can afford such whims, and he frequently receives glowing testimonials from them. But this particular letter struck a brand-new note.

The customer—a lady naturalist—reported that she had made a pet of a red-winged blackbird. One day she fed him crumbs of the baker's special bread. The following day she spread before him crumbs of another type of bread.

"He flatly refused to touch them," she concluded, "and scolded me angrily until I gave him your bread."

This is the first indication that any of our furred or feathered friends of the animal kingdom have joined us in our more and more choosy attitude toward the staff of life. They probably were bound to come in sooner or later, though. Time was when bread was what Mother saw fit to bake, and you either took it or left it alone. But in the U.S. today, bakers are turning out hundreds of different kinds of bread, and many have partisans whose devotion is so strong that the offer of a substitute will set them, too, scolding so angrily as to give themselves indigestion.

The Connecticut baker, for instance, has a list of regular clients whose glitter rivals that of the clientele of the famed Fifth Avenue jeweler, Tiffany. Such well-known people as Dorothy Thompson, Yehudi Menuhin and Gloria Swanson so dote on

the bread that they take it with them on their travels. In fact, when Miss Swanson was making personal appearances with her comeback hit *Sunset Boulevard*, she ordered two loaves air-mailed to each of her stops in time to meet her on arrival.

In a recent coast-to-coast tour of flour mills and bakeries, I sampled nearly 200 widely varied breads, ranging from the heavy, molasses-rich brown bread of Boston to a Los Angeles "reducing" loaf so thin and dry that you can almost see through a slice of it. At one Washington, D.C., supermarket alone, where bread was displayed along both sides of a 50-foot rack, I counted 83 varieties. And at the American Institute of Baking in Chicago—the research division of the American Bakers Association—I watched students busily inventing more new kinds, at least one successful new



Sandwiches are so popular that during the picnic season Americans eat twice as much bread per month

The tenth anniversary of enriched flour finds us eating 40,000,000 loaves a day—full of vitamins and iron and easy on the taste buds

By ROBERT FROMAN

creation being a requirement for graduation. One result of these experiments is an odd raisin loaf lightly flavored with a clean, brisk, mint taste. Another student has invented a rye bread to which he adds the surprising but pleasant tang of grated lemon peel.

Even plain white bread comes in several different varieties. You can buy it hearth-baked—meaning that the loaves are placed directly on the oven floor instead of in pans—so that it has a thick golden crust and gives off a strong, hearty odor of wheat and yeast. Or you can have it pan-baked and raised so high that each slice seems almost to float on air and just barely hints of its wheat origin. Or you can find dense, compact loaves so rich with milk, butter, eggs, sugar and other ingredients that a slice is almost a meal in itself.

There's plenty of room for all this diversity. We eat a year-round average of 40,000,000 loaves of bread per day. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, grain products in general, of which bread is by far the most important, provide about 25 per cent of the nation's calories and 25 per cent of the proteins. It's no wonder we have come to like variety in something that makes up such a large part of our diet.

According to anthropologists, grain in the form of wild grass seeds became one of the chief foods of our ancestors as soon as they came down out of the trees. At first, primitive men, being endowed with heroic digestive tracts, simply chewed and swallowed the whole seeds raw. Later some cave-dwelling Brillat-Savarin made one of the greatest culinary hits of all time by pounding the seeds in

mortar-and-pestle style and baking the coarse flour into crude, flat cakes.

Several millennia later, a lazy Egyptian slave made another great discovery quite by accident. It was his job to mix flour and water, shape the resultant paste into disks and bake them into hard cakes. One evening he mixed a batch, then found that his fire had gone out.

"The devil with it," he decided, being a rather privileged type of slave. "It can wait till morning."

So he let the disks of dough sit overnight. But when he got to them next day, the disks were no longer flat. They had puffed up into hemispheres several times their original size. He stuck them in the oven anyway—and gave bread to the world. For his master and his master's friends and eventually the whole of Egypt (Continued on page 42)



Eddie gets down and grabs the tie, runs the knot up against Chauncey's neck and yanks

ILLUSTRATED BY EARL OLIVER HURST