

THE STORY OF BREAD

It is believed that wheat was growing in the highlands of Abyssinia about five thousand years ago. It must have been growing in Egypt, also, for grains of wheat were found in an Egyptian pyramid tomb dating back to 3000 B.C.

Bread was used as currency in Egypt, and at one time the salary of the chief priest was paid in "Fine Loaves" as well as "Course Loaves!" The "Fine Loaves" must have been made of fine or white flour from which all the rough bran had been sifted by the hand labor of slaves.

When the Romans invaded Egypt in 47 B.C., the use of wheat was brought back to Rome and its conquered countries. But the Romans didn't conquer the Germans, so perhaps that is why today rye bread is more popular than wheat bread in Germany.

The early records of Egyptian life-around 3000 B.C.-show that the baking of bread was considered important. The supervisor of the royal bakeries enjoyed a position of privilege. White bread at one's table was a mark of luxury, because slaves were needed for the long labor of sifting out by hand all the roughage from the ground whole wheat.

In ancient times, bread was used as an offering to the gods. Pliny the Elder told of an urn in a temple in Rome which was always full of fresh bread to be used by temple visitors as a gift offering to the gods.

The Greeks and Romans made baking more of an art by changing the flat loaves of the Egyptians to a variety of shapes. The Romans had strict laws, and every baker who sold bread underweight was fined and put in prison.

Since prehistoric times, some form of bread made from grains has been a staple of man's diet. All civilizations have had breads and cereals as principal foods especially where meat was scarce or was forbidden for religious reasons. Of all the grains, wheat and corn (maize) appear in all civilizations as man's favorites. Barley, oats, rye, rice, and millet are ground for flour but have much less gluten content, so the bread made from them is heavy.

The hard seeds of the grains were probably chewed by the cave man, until someone thought of grinding the seeds between stones. The upper and nether millstones spoken of in the Bible were considered an important part of a man's fortune if he were lucky enough to own a set.

Many superstitions refer to bread:

- If you drop a slice of bread, you will make money.**
- If by chance you must take the last slice of bread on the plate, you will be an old maid or a bachelor. On the other hand, it is also said that if a girl deliberately waits for the last slice, she is waiting for a handsome husband.**

- When you are moving, the very last thing to put into the moving van is a loaf of bread, and it must be the first thing off at the new house so there will always be food in your home.
- A crust of bread in a newborn baby's crib will keep evil spirits away.
- When traveling in dangerous country, a crust in your pocket serves as a good-luck charm.
- The Mohammedans never cut bread with a knife; they break it.
- In Russia, guests were welcomed with bread and salt.
- "He knows which side his bread is buttered on" means he's a pretty keen fellow.
- "It's my bread and butter" refers to the source of your income.
- "It's not my bread and butter" means something is not important to you.
- Ben Franklin said, "Never spare the person's wine or the baker's bread."
- "He butter his bread on both sides" means an extravagant chap.
- The Spanish say, "White bread, troubles are less."