

Press Release:

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London's diverse dough consigned to the bread bin

Arriving hot on the heels of National Sandwich Week a new report, *Bread Street: the British baking bloomer*, identifies the threat to London's food diversity posed by that symbol of standardisation: sliced bread. Despite the huge diversity celebrated in *Bread Street*, approximately 80% of the bread sold in the UK today is sliced, wrapped, and made from the industrial Chorleywood Bread Process. Just two companies provide more than half the bread we consume.

London Food Link'sⁱ chair, Anne Dolamore is appalled: "*These over-salted, non-moulding and tasteless slabs are a poor legacy of centuries of baking which have given us bloomers, cottage loaves, coburgs and stotties. In London especially, our range of domestic breads has been added to by sour-dough, chapati, pitta, bagel, pumpernickel and other breads which reflect the diversity of our citizens.*"

Standardised bread is not only contributing to the erosion of variety in baking, but is also often unhealthy, being high in salt and saturated fat, and stripped of many of its nutrients. One reason it may be so popular is its low price, with many supermarkets selling this bread as a loss leader i.e. at prices below its cost of production. This disregard for quality over cost is emphasised by one of the interviewees, an Italian Home baker who commented, "*People are obsessed with the price of food. Here you want everything cheap.*"

Bread Street: the British baking bloomer,ⁱⁱ is part of a London Food Link project which uses bread to reflect London's diversity through the experiences of a Somalian home-baker and a Polish Commercial Bakery amongst others. Accompanying the report is a set of 12 postcards from an exhibition of Sara Hannant'sⁱⁱⁱ photographs of bakers in domestic settings and commercial bakeries^{iv}.

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Review copies of the report and the postcards are available from Ben Reynolds on 020 7837 1228

Editor's Notes:

ⁱ **London Food Link** is a project by Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming. London Food Link aims to help producers, consumers and retailers make a positive choice for sustainable local food. This means better access to affordable, high quality and seasonal food, shorter supply chains and campaigning for policies that promote a thriving food economy and culture. London Food Link members include councils, health authorities, businesses, environment and community groups.

**For more information contact: Ben Reynolds, London Food Link, 020 7837 1228.
www.londonfoodlink.org**

ⁱⁱ **Bread Street** is funded by grants from the Arts Council England (London), the Association for London Government and the Bridge House Estates Trust Fund. *Bread Street: the British baking bloomer* report is available from Sustain for £15 + £1p&p.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Sara Hannant** is an award-winning photographer, her work is held in private and public collections internationally. She has 15 years experience in editorial, corporate and international agencies. She encourages socially excluded groups and community organisations to express themselves through workshops and facilitated teaching programmes. Sara has collaborated with dancers, choreographers, theatre companies, writers and artists. Urban identity, diversity and humour are some of the themes explored through her work. In 1995 she received a Royal Society of Arts award that took her to Mexico. It was while photographing the Day of Dead rituals that she first made images of bread. An exhibition of these images 'Todos Santos' planted the seed for the visual side to 'Bread Street'. **Contact 07932 717272.**

^{iv} The **Bread Street** exhibition contains 30 framed photos of London's rich baking tradition, aiming to reflect the cultural and ethnic diversity of Londoners through the breads they make and eat. Admission is free to the photography exhibition, currently at Gunnersbury Park Museum from 8th April – mid August, and then at Three Mills Trust, Newham until mid September. Postcards taken from this exhibition are available from Sustain for 60p per card or £6 for a pack of 12.