

## Real Bread Campaign complaint to the ASA

26 September 2023

Since early July 2023, Asda has been running a 'Food Revolution' advertising campaign across a range of media. This campaign includes claims that a number of Asda own-brand products are 'better' than equivalents from what it calls 'luxury shops', asking "does great-tasting food have to cost more?" The claims are partly based on taste tests of specific products conducted in May 2023.

One of the products is Asda sourdough bread, which the ad campaign claims is 'officially tastier than Harrods'. We believe that this campaign is in breach of Rules 3.1, 3.3, 3.7, 3.9, 3.10 and 3.33 of [The CAP Code for non-broadcast advertising](#).

Elements of the campaign that we have seen are:

A video, titled 'hipsters taste sourdough', uploaded to YouTube on 1 July 2023. (We have been told this also appeared on TV, but have been unable to verify this.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1mnQ7QVA80>

A print advertisement published in Teesside Gazette on 8 July 2023  
<https://www.sustainweb.org/assets/asda-sourdough-teesside-gazette-8jul23-Sep23.pdf>

An online advertisement, seen on 23 July 2023  
[https://www.sustainweb.org/assets/230701\\_searchpromo\\_foodrevolution\\_asdaextras\\_sourdough-Sep23.pdf](https://www.sustainweb.org/assets/230701_searchpromo_foodrevolution_asdaextras_sourdough-Sep23.pdf)

An advertorial feature, published by Metro on 31 July 2023 <https://metro.co.uk/2023/07/31/how-did-this-supermarkets-range-fair-in-taste-tests-vs-luxury-shops-19118643/>

A print advertisement, published in YOU magazine on 27 August 2023  
<https://www.sustainweb.org/assets/asda-sourdough-you-mag-27aug23-Sep23.pdf>

Our complaint is based on Asda:

Only selling the specific product tested (Asda Extra Special White Sourdough Boule, 1kg) in a minority of its stores (only 228 of more than 600, and not in its online shop) during the period of the ad campaign and not stating this fact. We believe this leads to the possibility of people being misled into believing the 'better' claims apply to one or more other Asda 'sourdough' products that were/are available. These other products that Asda markets using the word 'sourdough' include at least two are fundamentally different, made using baker's yeast and additives, which are not used in genuine sourdough bread making – what we call sourfaux.

Claiming that the advertised product is "baked in store from locally-sourced flour and it's all hand folded and hand finished," when a) the company does not substantiate the source of flour that is local to each of those in-store bakeries and anyway; b) we understand that the company closed all of its in-store bakeries in 2021, so can't be doing anything by hand in any of its stores.

Not substantiating the claim that "this bread is hardly your standard supermarket fare, with a craft process going back to its century-old heritage." Most, if not all, of the major multiple retailers now sell products they name and market using the word sourdough, so we believe it is misleading of Asda to claim that theirs aren't 'standard supermarket fare.' How can Asda, which was founded in 1949, claim a heritage of making or selling genuine sourdough bread that stretches back 100 years? This suggests the truth might be that the product is made for, rather than by, Asda. If this is the case, whose heritage is Asda co-opting? Which company that has been making sourdough bread in the UK for 100 years makes this product? Our understanding is that the earliest evidence of the UK revival of crafting sourdough bread only dates back to around the early 1970s.

Further confusing the issue (and, potentially, shoppers) with the claim: "We're not dealing with a run-of-the-mill baker's yeast, but sourdough starter with an eight-year heritage and made with flour from the Cotswolds, fermented for 18 hours and stonebaked." So which is true, that the product is made from flour sourced locally to each store in which it is baked; or made in a minority of Asda stores from flour that (with the exception of stores in the Cotswolds) is not locally-sourced; or actually not made in Asda stores at all but at a central production unit somewhere and then transported to a minority of Asda stores? If this is the

case, are they fully-baked at the CPU, or part-baked there and then re-baked in Asda in-store loaf tanning salons to brown and crisp the crusts? Does the supposed heritage of this product go back a hundred years or just eight?

Omitting material information by not stating whether a) the 'fermented for 18 hours' claim applies to just the sourdough starter, an intermediary leave/levain, or all of the final dough; and b) if the product is baked in traditional ovens built entirely from stone, ovens with natural stone soles, or ovens with no genuine stone in them at all.

In general, we believe that Asda conducting a confused appropriation of language properly associated with small-scale, artisan crafting of genuine sourdough bread in order to lead people to part with their money, without substantiating all of its claims.

[www.realbreadcampaign.org](http://www.realbreadcampaign.org)