

Are supermarket bloomers pants?

A Real Bread Campaign investigation of UK supermarket in-store bakeries



**Real Bread
Campaign**

realbreadcampaign.org

Are Supermarket bloomers pants?

This report was compiled in March 2010 by Chris Young, project officer for the Real Bread Campaign, from research carried out between June 2009 and February 2010.

The Real Bread Campaign's definition of Real Bread is that made with flour, water, yeast (cultured of naturally occurring, though some flatbreads do not require yeast) and salt. Any additions must be natural food ingredients, such as seeds, nuts, fats and fruit. The production of Real Bread does *not* involve the use of any processing aid or artificial additive of any kind. This is the definition of Real Bread used throughout this report.

There is an open invitation to any producer or retailer to add those products that meet the campaign's Real Bread criteria to the online Real Bread Finder. The campaign also welcomes any information or assistance that would help support its aims of encouraging the eating and local baking of Real Bread in Britain.

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Introduction

'If all supermarkets and bakeries followed the aims and guidance of your campaign many of the bread products that customers know and love would be of an inferior quality...'

Peter Knott, master baker at Marks & Spencer
on the Real Bread Campaign's crazy idea of additive-free bread making

The Real Bread Campaign is part of the charity Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming. The campaign brings together everyone who cares about their daily loaf to encourage the increased consumption and local production of Real Bread. Working with our membership we are also looking for ways towards a loaf that is better for our health, our communities and our planet.

In May 2009, the Real Bread Campaign launched Stick One on 'Em! an initiative to highlight the issue of unlabelled substances being permitted in the production of the wrapped sliced loaves that account for around 80% of the UK market¹.

We now turn our attention to supermarkets. As their in-store bakeries produce around 17%² of the loaves we buy in the UK, it is unsurprising that much has been written about them. For example in a 2004 special report for The Ecologist, Joanna Blythman dubbed supermarket in-store bakeries as 'nothing but bogus 'retail theatre''³.

More recently, however, we had heard some much more positive stories: supermarkets supporting selected local independent bakeries by selling their Real Bread; one announced that it had switched to using 100% British flour; and we know that one even has an own-brand Real Bread made by an independent bakery. These are just the sort of things that the Real Bread Campaign seeks to champion through, for example, our online Real Bread Finder. So, we thought, have things changed since Blythman's report? Is the aroma that now greets you as you walk into a supermarket always coming from freshly baked Real Bread?

Repeated questioning of six major UK supermarket chains⁴ between June 2009 and February 2010 leads us to believe that in almost all cases it isn't. This is a pity because bread is an integral part of the lives of the majority of people in Britain⁵. Nutritionists are all but unanimous in recommending bread, especially wholegrain, as one of the pillars of a healthy diet and with the ongoing decline of the high street, for many people a supermarket is the nearest place from which to buy a loaf.

The Real Bread Campaign believes that people have the right to know just how in-store bakery loaves are being produced. Without this knowledge, how can we make fully informed choices between purchasing them or opting for Real Bread from local independent bakeries or our own ovens?

The key issues that we are concerned about are:

- Hidden additives
- Loss of skilled jobs from local communities
- Abuse of terms such as 'artisan' and 'freshly baked'

¹ Stick one on em! http://www.sustainweb.org/realbread/bread_labelling/#1

² Factsheet No. 3 The British Bread And Bakery Snacks Market, Federation of Bakers, October 2005, <http://www.bakersfederation.org.uk/resources/FS3%20-%20UK%20Bakery%20Market.pdf> (viewed 21 February 2010)

³ The Ecologist, 1st September 2004 http://www.theecologist.org/investigations/food_and_farming/268621/special_report_supermarkets_bread.html

⁴ Asda, Marks and Spencer, Morrisons, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Waitrose

⁵ 'Bread is bought by 99% of British households' Flour Advisory Bureau, <http://www.fabflour.co.uk/content/1/31/facts-about-bread-in-the-uk.html> viewed 21 February 2010

Our concerns

An honest crust?

Many people probably believe that the crusty, delicious-smelling loaves produced by supermarket in-store bakeries are Real Bread made using just flour, water, yeast and salt. One would be forgiven for not even thinking to check. Like those other basic foodstuffs, milk and butter, which contain only milk and butter respectively, surely all that's in a loaf of bread is bread?

Labelling law

When it comes to disclosure of ingredients for loaves that have been prepacked for direct sale or that are not wrapped⁶, the law is on the side of the supermarkets, not the customer. If you want to know what went in to the making of a supermarket in-store bakery loaf, the onus is on you as the customer to ask for this information. According to the Food Labelling Regulations 1996, all that a supermarket has to indicate on the shelf labels or packaging of such loaves is the presence of certain allergens or the use of a flour treatment agent, the name and composition of which would not have to be given.

The Real Bread Campaign lists on its website many of the additives permitted in bread production⁷.

Really hidden additives...that aren't additives

Current buzz words around industrial food manufacture include 'label friendly' and 'clean label'⁸. These euphemisms are being applied to substances that are intended for use as processing aids, which the law does not consider to be additives.

The notion is that if a substance is used only to help with processing, it is neither an ingredient or an additive and for this questionable reason, the Food Labelling Regulations 1996 state that, unlike additives, processing aids do not need to be named in any listing of ingredients. In fact, a label would not even have to mention that a processing aid had been used. So, even if you do manage to obtain a list of ingredients for an in-store bakery loaf, you still won't be any the wiser as to whether or not a processing aid has been involved, let alone what it was.

Whilst processing aids might be 'friendly' to a label, the product itself does not necessarily have to be as 'clean'. The same labelling regulations also outline that, even if its residues or byproducts remain in the finished product, a substance may be deemed a processing aid as long as it presents no health risk and does not have a technological effect in the finished product⁹.

⁶ "...prepacked by a retailer for sale by him on the premises where the food is packed or from a vehicle or stall used by him," or "prepacked by the producer of the food for sale by him either on the premises where the food is produced or on other premises from which he conducts business under the same name as the business conducted on the premises where the food is produced..." The Food Labelling Regulations 1996 http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1996/Uksi_19961499_en_2.htm#mdiv2

⁷ Additives permitted in UK bread/flour production <http://www.sustainweb.org/realbread/additives/>

⁸ "Baking Enzymes are used as flour additives and in dough conditioners to replace chemical ingredients and to perform other functions in a label-friendly way." Lallemand, distributor of enzyme concentrate Novamyl. Source: www.lallemand.com/
"...today's modern baker looks to enzymes to effectively modify his dough with label-friendly enzymes rather than dough conditioners with long chemical names." BIO-CAT, supplier of food enzymes. Source: www.bio-cat.com/applicationDetails.php?application_id=5

"Bakels offer a range of ingredients which are clean label. They are free from emulsifiers and Hydrogenated fats, allowing bakers to produce quality products with as clean a label as possible." Bakels, suppliers of ingredients to the baking industry. Source: <http://www.britishbakels.co.uk/products.cfm?section=healthyeatingandcleanlabel>

⁹ A processing aid '...means any substance not consumed as a food by itself, intentionally used in the processing of raw materials, foods or their ingredients, to fulfil a certain technological purpose during treatment or processing, and which may result in the unintentional but technically unavoidable presence of residues of the substance or its derivatives in the final product, provided that these residues do not present any health risk and do not have any technological effect on the finished product.' the Food Labelling Regulations, HMSO, 1996 http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1996/Uksi_19961499_en_1.htm

We believe that this law is open to abuse. To give a specific example, the enzyme alpha amylase, obtained from fungal sources, is marketed to the baking industry as a processing aid to, amongst other things, increase volume, give darker crust and prolong softness of loaves¹⁰. Are these not technological effects in the end product? Yet this enzyme is officially classified as a processing aid, and therefore is not legally required to appear in the ingredients list.

On the health issue, alpha amylase has been suspected of triggering an allergic response when ingested¹¹. As studies have found residues of it in finished loaves¹² does this not potentially present a health risk to those with this allergy and hence warrant a declaration of its use?

Though it now seems unlikely that processing aids from animal sources are being used by industrial bakers in Britain unless clearly stated on the label¹³, enzymes extracted from fungal or bacterial sources are. It is not unknown for genetically modified material to be involved at some stage in the production of enzymes that are marketed to industrial bakers¹⁴. Whilst ingredients from genetically modified sources need to be labelled clearly, even if its residues or byproducts remain in the finished product and are consumed by the purchaser, an enzyme produced by a genetically modified organism (or a non-GM organism fed on, say, sugars from a genetically modified plant) would not.

Whilst the use of unlabelled processing aids is perfectly legal and all are (currently) deemed to be safe, a survey carried out in spring 2009 by AGR Food & Drink Market Research on behalf of the Real Bread Campaign and the Real Food Festival indicated that almost everyone (over 93% of people surveyed) believed that such a lack of transparency in product labelling is unacceptable¹⁵.

Further detail on the subject of processing aids can be found on the Real Bread Campaign website¹⁶.

A load of old biscuits?

In many cases, what is called an in-store bakery is little more than a tanning salon for baguettes.

It takes loaves that were baked at a low temperature at some point in the past, then chilled or perhaps frozen, and bakes them again to re-soften the crumb and give the crusts an attractive hue and crunch. Though they might look like, smell like and perhaps be marketed as freshly baked loaves, such 'bake-off' products are in a sense biscuits: they have been cooked twice.

The loss of moisture is a contributory factor in the staling of bread¹⁷. All bread loses moisture during baking and then continues to do so afterwards at a slower rate. Bake-off products are subjected to a second baking and therefore a second period of higher moisture loss. This could help to explain why a supermarket in-store bakery loaf might appear to go stale more quickly than Real Bread produced by an independent bakery or at home.

The bake-off process also uses more energy than baking from scratch. According to an article in British Baker magazine, bake-off production: '...demands around twice the energy of conventional breadmaking

¹⁰ Enzymes for baking http://www.mapsenzymes.com/Enzymes_Baking.asp#enzymes1

¹¹ 'Allergic reaction after eating a-amylase (Asp o 2)-containing bread' Allergy, Volume 50 Issue 1, pp 85 -87, X. Baur, A. B. Czuppon, January 1995 <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/119243078/abstract?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0>
'Bread eating induced oral angioedema due to a amylase allergy' Journal of Investigational Allergology and Clinical Immunology 2004, Volume 14 Issue 4 pp 346-347, Á. Moreno-Ancillo, C. Domínguez-Noche, A. C. Gil-Adrados, P. M. Cosmes <http://www.jiaci.org/issues/vol14issue04/346-347.pdf>

'Is fungal a-amylase in bread an allergen?' Clinical & Experimental Allergy, Volume 30 Issue 4, Pages 560 – 565, April 2000, Sander, Raulf-Heimsoth, Van Kampen & Baur <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/119046999/abstract>

¹² 'Heating inactivates the enzymatic activity and partially inactivates the allergenic activity of Asp o 2' Clinical & Experimental Allergy, Volume 26 Issue 2, Pages 232 – 234, February 1996, X. BAUR, A. B. CZUPPON I. SANDER <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/119220873/abstract>

¹³ Statement from the Real Bread Campaign on the possible use of unlabelled processing aids in factory bread, 19 May 2009 http://www.sustainweb.org/realbread/bread_labelling/#statement

¹⁴ The use of enzymes in baking http://www.biocatalysts.com/pdf/technical_bulletins/TB113_Baking.pdf viewed 20 February 2010

¹⁵ Online survey of 641 consumers around the UK carried out during April 2009

¹⁶ Background notes on processing aids http://www.sustainweb.org/realbread/processing_aids/

¹⁷ McGee, Harold, McGee on Food & Cooking, Hodder and Stoughton, 2004 (p.541)

if the partial baking and the final bake are done in a baking oven. Another problem lies with the freezing of par-baked bread, which demands a lot of energy, especially if it is likely to be stored frozen for longer than a month....After just one month of frozen storage, the energy use will be roughly double the energy spent on par-baking, freezing and final baking, without even factoring in the energy used in frozen distribution.¹⁸

These astonishingly wasteful energy statistics call into question the government's financial backing for supermarket in-store bakeries through lucrative Climate Change Agreements. In-store bakeries, because they are (apparently) primary production sites, qualify for financial incentives from government, paid for by taxpayers, to encourage progress on energy efficiency against ambitious targets. However, industry statistics such as the above demonstrate that bake-off production common in supermarket in-store bakeries may already use twice as much energy as necessary for everyday bread production. Any apparent savings are therefore paltry in comparison to what could be achieved by changing the way that bread is made to genuinely efficient methods. Figures for 2004 (the latest found in research for this report) show that 1,500 supermarkets were receiving money from taxpayers to reduce energy used in supermarket in-house bakeries achieving a reduction of only around 11% overall.¹⁹

Artisanal or artful?

Perhaps more galling for a local independent craft baker than a supermarket calling bake-off loaves 'fresh bread' is the use of the word 'artisan' as a synonym for 'looks a bit rustic'. Although supermarkets make available something that resembles Real Bread, they can take opportunities for skilled employment away from local communities in which it is sold and from other craft bakers who have a better claim on the term 'artisan'.

In the decade to 2006, a total of 20,260 specialist shops (such as independent local bakeries) closed, a decrease of 39%²⁰. Between 1997 and 2002, specialist shops were closing at a rate of 50 per week²¹. Overall, the number of small (fewer than eight employees) local craft bakeries plummeted from 18,000 in the early 1950s to around 3,500 in 2002²². Though supermarkets cannot be held entirely responsible for this decline, neither can they be absolved of all blame.

A study by the New Economics Foundation in Northumberland found that, of every £1 spent with local businesses, an average of 76% was re-invested locally, giving a total local spend of £1.76. By contrast, for every £1 spent with suppliers based outside the area, only 36p was retained.²³

The Real Bread Campaign does not criticise anyone whose job it is to push the button or turn the dial to bake-off loaves for the prescribed time, nor do we criticise those that supply supermarkets with bake-off loaves. However, we believe that learning the skills to bake all-natural Real Bread from scratch and doing so for an independent business that is part of the local community in which the bread is then sold would be of greater value to that person and that community.

¹⁸ Par-baked poser, British Baker, 9th October 2009 http://www.bakeryinfo.co.uk/news/fullstory.php/aid/5913/Par-baked_poser.html

¹⁹ Climate Change Agreements: Results of the first target period assessment, version 1.2 (2004). AEA Technologies. See: http://fieldplace.com/UK-ETS/cca_aug04.pdf

²⁰ Business start-ups and closures: VAT registrations and de-registrations in 2006, Small Business Service, Sheffield, 2007

²¹ Oram, J., Conisbee, M., Simms, A. Ghost Town Britain II: Death on the High Street, new economics foundation, London, 2003

²² Personal communication, David Smith, National Association of Master Bakers, 2002 cited by Barrett, Mel in Bread Street, Sustain Publications, 2004

²³ Sacks, J. Public spending for public benefit, New Economics Foundation, London, July 2005

Our questions

In May 2009, the Real Bread Campaign contacted the customer services/relations departments of Asda, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, Tesco, Sainsbury's and Waitrose to establish the person responsible for their in-store bakeries. Then on 3rd June 2009 we sent the letter below to each. Like this report, our original line of questioning focused on in-store bakery products, though it also was intended to help us point consumers to any other Real Bread sold by supermarkets.

As not one supermarket answered all of our questions and some did not respond at all, we then followed up each letter on more than one occasion by various combinations of email, phone, fax and online feedback form.

In all cases, these attempts also failed to elicit full responses to all of our questions and so on 26th August 2009, we forwarded a copy of the original letters to the Chief Executive (or equivalent) of each chain. In cases where even this still went unanswered, we followed it up with another letter on 26th January 2010.

The original letter

The Real Bread Campaign is dedicated to supporting the increased consumption and local production of Real Bread. We define this as being made with all natural ingredients and without the use of any artificial additives, improvers or processing aids.

As part of our work in helping people to find Real Bread locally, we are contacting the major supermarket chains. It would be really useful if you could please answer the following questions.

If you are not the right person to ask, I would be grateful if you could pass this letter to the appropriate person to answer.

Local independent bakeries

- 1) Do you have a policy of selling bread produced by local, independent bakeries?
- 2) If so, could you please let us know which bakeries' products you stock in which areas?

In-store bakeries

- 3) How many stores do you operate in the UK?
- 4) How many of these operate in-store bakeries?
- 5) How many of your in-store bakeries employ fully skilled bakers making all breads from scratch on site, i.e. from separate ingredients, rather than adding water to pre-mixes or baking off chilled, frozen or part-baked dough?
- 6) Do you provide training to a nationally recognised standard for all of your bakers and if so, on which accreditation scheme?

Labelling

We are aware that current legislation means that supermarkets are not obliged to list ingredients (and any additives or and processing aids) on the labels of their in-store bakery products.

- 7) Please advise if you have taken the voluntary decision to make available to your customers a full list of ingredients (and any additives, improvers and processing aids) on the labels of your in-store bakery products.
- 8) If you do not already, do you have the intention of introducing such lists to your in-store bakery product labelling?
- 9) Could you please confirm that all of your in-store bakery lines are what we define as Real Bread?
- 10) If you are unable to do so, please advise which of your lines do match our definition of Real Bread.

Own brand wrapped bread

The use of processing aids does not have to be declared on the labels of wrapped bread. We are already in correspondence with The Federation of Bakers with regard to branded breads but we are receiving queries from members of the public about supermarket own brands.

- 11) Please can you also confirm that none of your own-brand wrapped bread is made using unlabelled processing aids?
- 12) If any of your own-brand wrapped bread is made using processing aids, please advise which lines are not.
- 13) If processing aids are used and any of these are of animal or GM origin, please advise us in which lines they are being used and which processing aids are from what origin.
- 14) If processing aids are used and if you do not list these already, will you be taking the voluntary step of doing so in future?

We look forward to your replies and being able to advise our supporters that they can find Real Bread in your stores.

Finally, if you have been able to confirm that any or all of your in-store bakery breads are made with all natural ingredients and without the use of any artificial additives, improvers or processing aids, we invite you to add the relevant lines to our Real Bread Finder at: www.realbreadcampaign.org

What they did (and didn't) tell us

None of the six supermarkets we contacted answered all of our questions.

Only one - Marks & Spencer - confirmed in two informative letters that some, though not all, of its in-store bakery loaves meet the campaign's definition of Real Bread. Justin King, Sainsbury's Group Chief Executive, also gave us a reasonably detailed response.

Deciding which of the other chains should get a prize for being the least informative is tough.

In an email of 8th July 2009, a representative of the Asda Service Team wrote: 'Unfortunately, we don't have any information about the subject you're particularly interested in. All information we can supply you with is on our website www.asda.co.uk, which we update regularly.' The website does not answer all of our questions. Though Asda Chief Executive Officer, Andy Bond, did not reply to our first letter to him, in a five sentence response to our second letter, on 10th February Linda Kellett in the Director's Office wrote: 'I'm grateful to you for taking the time to contact us about our in-store baked bread. I'm afraid we are unable to answer your questions at this time and thank you for your enquiry.'

In an email of 13th July 2009, a Tesco Customer Service Manager wrote: 'I appreciate you enquiring us [sic] with regards to our bakery products. We're always happy to help, but I'm afraid that we receive so many requests to fill in their questionnaire, that we are unable to do this. I'm really sorry that I can't help you further.' Then on 10th August 2009, a different Customer Service Manager wrote: 'Unfortunately, I'm unable to give you an answer to your many questions and I'm unsure whether Tesco will. A lot of this appears to be company sensitive?' Tesco chief executive Sir Terry Leahy did not reply to our letters of 26th August 2009 or 26th January 2010.

The only response we received from our various attempts to contact Waitrose was an email on 7th September 2009 from Teresa Lindley, their Central Buyer for Bakery, which did not answer all of our questions. Managing Director Mark Price did not reply to our subsequent letter of 26th January 2010.

Which supermarket in-store bakery loaves are Real Bread?

Sadly, our research suggests that almost no supermarket bakery loaves are Real Bread. In most cases, it's almost certain that flour, water, yeast and salt are just the start of the list of what went into the manufacture of those bread-shaped objects. There are a few, but sadly far too few.

Marks & Spencer

On 11th September 2009, Peter Knott, Master Baker at Marks & Spencer wrote: 'Our crusty farmhouse bread range sold in our In-Store Bakeries are made using a traditionally fermented sponge and dough process with over 24 hours proving and no emulsifiers or ascorbic acid.' In a letter dated 12th February 2010, he clarified that the following in-store bakery lines meet the campaign's definition:

- 400g and 800g white bloomer loaf
- 400g and 800g farmhouse loaf
- 400g and 800g wholemeal farmhouse loaf
- 400g country grain loaf
- 400g five seed golden wholemeal cob
- White pave
- Sourdough loaf
- Tartine slices

Sainsbury's

We have yet to find or be told by Sainsbury's of any in-store bakery product that meets our definition of Real Bread. Though in a letter dated 4th November 2009, Justin King, Sainsbury's Group Chief Executive wrote: '...we have removed all emulsifiers from our scratch baked breads and the improvers that we use contain a blend of salt, fat, ascorbic acid, soya flour and sugars,' he also advised us that: 'The process [sic] aids that are used do contribute to increased bread volume and prolonged crumb softness...'

And whilst he listed six products from their Taste The Difference range that ‘...are both additive and process [sic] aid free,’ it appears that since this letter was written, the recipes of these products have changed as the wrappers of those on sale at Sainsbury’s in Angel Islington in January 2010 listed an unnamed flour treatment agent.

Morrisons

We have yet to find or be told by Morrisons of any in-store bakery product that meets our definition of Real Bread. In a letter dated 12th February 2010, the Trade Specialist Director of Morrisons wrote: ‘Improvers are only introduced to add to the quality of our products and are permitted ingredients used in quantities consistent with good manufacturing practices for the appeal and safety of such foods.’

Tesco

We have yet to find or be told by Tesco of any in-store bakery product that meets our definition of Real Bread. In an email of 8th February 2010 to a Real Bread Campaign member who asked if there was any Tesco loaf that contained no additives, a customer service manager wrote: ‘If any additives [sic] are used to prolong life this will be in accordance with our customers wishes.’

Since our last contact with Tesco, a supplier of food enzymes to more than one of the major supermarket chains confided to us that Tesco followed the Sainsbury’s lead in replacing chemical additives with processing aids to go ‘clean label’ about six months ago²⁴.

Waitrose

We have yet to find or be told by Waitrose of any in-store bakery product that meets our definition of Real Bread. In the one and only response from Waitrose, Teresa Lindley, Central Buyer for Bakery wrote: ‘GM ingredients are not used in any Waitrose own label bread and this includes processing aids.’

Asda

We have yet to find or be told by Asda of any in-store bakery product that meets our definition of Real Bread.

Labelling

Morrisons

In a letter dated 12th February 2010, the company’s Trade Specialist Director wrote: ‘...the labeling of all of our own label products not only complies with all legal requirements but it is also as helpful and informative as possible.’

Sainsbury’s

Justin King wrote that: ‘We fully comply with all legal requirements with regard to the use and declaration of processing aids and should these change we will of course amend the information we provide and our labels accordingly.’ On the subject of a lack of a detailed listing of ingredients, additives and nutritional information (none of which is legally required), he said: ‘Due to space and labelling machine constraints we are unable to print all this information on our in-store bakery labels.’²⁵

Marks & Spencer

Peter Knott outlined that: ‘Marks & Spencer operate an open and honest labeling policy across all of bakery. Due to space restrictions, we are unable to display full ingredients on the tickets, upon request the Bakery Staff can advise the ingredients and nutrition of all products.’

Waitrose

Teresa Lindley wrote: ‘Waitrose provides full details of all legally required information on its products. Where the bread is not pre-packaged we do this through the use of detailed shelf edge ticketing.’

Asda and Tesco both failed to comment on their labelling policies.

²⁴ From a telephone conversation on 25 January 2010 between Chris Young of the Real Bread Campaign and a reputable source who requested that both he and the company for which he works remain anonymous.

²⁵ Factsheet received from Justin King, Sainsbury’s Group Chief Executive on 9th October 2009

Scratching around

Only Sainsbury's told us how many of their stores have bakeries that produce loaves on site from scratch. A factsheet we received from Justin King, Sainsbury's Group Chief Executive on 9th October 2009 stated that: 'We operate 400 bakeries where bread is made from scratch using wheat flour, water, yeast and an improver mix.' Although additives are involved, at least this means that a number of staff members are learning some of the skills of a professional Real Bread baker. These bakeries also bake-off 'a range of specialist breads' and a further 275 stores house 100% bake-off operations. Sainsbury's has '...a comprehensive training scheme for Bakers, combining internal and external courses leading to accredited NVQ qualifications.'

Asda, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, Tesco and Waitrose did not give us numbers of stores baking loaves from scratch.

In January 2009, British Baker magazine published a list of the number of stores in each chain that bake any products from scratch²⁶. The figures in brackets are the total number of stores each chain lists on its website.

- Asda - 347 (nearly 400²⁷)
- Marks & Spencer - not listed (over 560²⁸ or perhaps over 600²⁹)
- Morrisons 391 - (over 403³⁰)
- Sainsbury's - 400³¹ (828³²)
- Tesco - 480 (2,362³³)
- Waitrose - not listed (223³⁴)

We are not convinced that these figures are accurate. For example, there being only nine Morrisons stores in the whole country not baking from scratch simply doesn't ring true. Though roughly half of Sainsbury's stores baking from scratch seems much more plausible, the figure of 400 given to us by Justin King doesn't tally with the figure of 370 in the in the British Baker report.

Though we understand from baking colleges that Morrisons, for example, invests in putting at least some of their bakers through officially accredited courses³⁵, none of the chains took the opportunity to confirm this.

Other information

Marks & Spencer

Peter Knott wrote that their ciabatta loaf, '4 ciabatta rolls' and '2 half ciabatta', 'available from the counter but not the in-store bakery' also meet our Real Bread criteria. He also said that no products contain ingredients of animal origin – though as dairy products are used in some, this does not in fact appear to be correct. Their 'best selling white sliced bread' does not contain emulsifiers but is 'based on the latest ingredient technology.' It also contains ascorbic acid.

²⁶ Scratch bakery figures taken from BB75 2010, British Baker, January 2010, viewed January 2010
http://bakeryinfo.co.uk/cp/29/BB75_tables_jan_2010.pdf

²⁷ Our locations <http://www.asda.jobs/all-about/locations/index.html> viewed 3rd February 2010

²⁸ Store finder http://www.marksandspencer.com/gp/store-locator?ie=UTF8&intid=gnav_store-finder&pf_rd_r=0939ZSXYHVPH3BFRMWZT&pf_rd_m=A2BO0OYVBKIQJM&pf_rd_t=101&pf_rd_i=42966030&pf_rd_p=469024753&pf_rd_s=global-top-4 viewed 3rd February 2010

²⁹ Company overview http://corporate.marksandspencer.com/aboutus/company_overview viewed 3rd February 2010

³⁰ Our stores <http://www.morrisons.co.uk/Corporate/About-Morrisons/Our-Stores/> viewed 3rd February 2010

³¹ Personal email from Sainsbury's CEO, Justin King, 9th October 2009

³² Store portfolio <http://www.j-sainsbury.co.uk/index.asp?pageid=189> viewed 3rd February 2010

³³ Interactive map http://www.tescopl.com/plc/about_us/map/ viewed 3rd February 2010

³⁴ About us <http://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/Display.aspx?&MasterId=768e29e8-41aa-4716-bce2-df302fa1c3d8&NavigationId=543> viewed 3rd February 2010

³⁵ Barking College Students Feature in Morrisons Educational Video
<http://www.barkingcollege.ac.uk/dynamiccontent/itemview.asp?category=1&item=6999>

Sainsbury's

Sainsbury's told us that all flour used by its in-store bakeries is milled from UK-grown wheat and the company uses no GM crops, ingredients, additives or derivatives in own-brand food products.

Waitrose

'We aim to source from the very best bakers in the business and this includes a number of independent artisan bakeries such as Oliver Adams, Gails, The Flour Station, Poilane, Exeter Street and in the near future Pullins,' wrote Teresa Lindley.

We also know from a trusted source that Waitrose has an own-brand wrapped sliced Real Bread, produced for the chain by a long fermentation process with natural leaven – but for some reason Waitrose has yet to take the opportunities we have offered to celebrate the fact.

Conclusions

The Real Bread Campaign believes that little has changed little since 2004 and Joanna Blythman's special report for The Ecologist. The adage that 'you can't judge a book by its cover', holds true for a supermarket in-store bakery loaf. Just because it looks, smells and perhaps even tastes like Real Bread doesn't necessarily mean that it is: it could well be 'notional bread'³⁶.

From our investigations, it seems that the majority of supermarket in-store bakery loaves are produced using artificial additives and processing aids and that many are not being baked from scratch on site but produced elsewhere to be re-baked at a later date as and when needed.

Supermarkets manage to find space to fit inventories of up to a dozen or more ingredients and additives on their own-label wrapped sliced loaves, so just how long can the lists for their in-store bakery products be and what sort of constraints make a labelling machine unable to label? They seem to have little difficulty in fitting plenty of marketing guff on the bags.

Though failure to give information cannot be held to be an admission of guilt supermarkets are not known for being shy when it comes to self-promotion. If they are employing trained craft bakers to produce Real Bread from scratch in their stores, is it not odd that they did not take this opportunity to say so? Could it be that they are happy to hide behind the law?

Supermarkets are not required to make any of the marketing claims that they do, so why do they not take voluntary decisions to be fully open and honest in labelling their loaves with a full list of ingredients, additives and processing aids?

The word 'artisan' does not have proper legal protection. Though its use should be limited to products that have been crafted by artisans, that is to say skilled craftspeople who have been trained and gained experience in their profession, we believe this is being abused. In relation to bread, we believe the term artisan should exclude loaves whose production has involved corner-cutting practices, such as using artificial additives, processing aids, dried sourdough and bake-off.

Similarly, we believe that the use of terms 'fresh' and 'freshly baked' to describe bake-off products is legalised deception.

And finally, where supermarkets use inherently energy inefficient processes to make bread, such as in-store bake-off, we believe they should not receive government subsidies ineffectually to tweak their energy consumption (which in any case should save them money). Instead, incentives to reduce carbon should be tied to adoption by supermarkets of inherently more energy efficient processes such as baking Real Bread from scratch and using renewable sources of energy.

³⁶ In the film Food Inc, dir. Robert Kenner, Magnolia Pictures 2008, Michael Pollan says 'Now there are tomatoes all year round, grown halfway around the world, picked when it was green, and ripened with ethylene gas. Although it looks like a tomato, it's kind of a notional tomato. I mean, it's the idea of a tomato.' <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1286537/quotes>

What should happen now?

What you can do

If you share the Real Bread Campaign's concerns about supermarket in-store bakeries then please vote with your shopping basket.

To see if you are lucky enough to live near one of Britain's few remaining Real Bread bakeries, check out the Real Bread Finder at: http://www.sustainweb.org/realbread/bakery_finder/

If you are a Real Bread baker and not yet on the finder, please add your Real Breads today.

If you don't do so already, you could start baking your own Real Bread.

If you would like to see Real Bread in the aisles of a supermarket, you could:

- Ask a member of staff to advise you which in-store bakery loaf has been made without the use of any flour treatment agent, flour improver, processing aids or any other artificial additive, preferably on site from scratch.
- If this fails to unearth any Real Bread, ask for the duty manager and get her/him to log your insistence that you will only buy a loaf that has been baked without the use of any artificial additives or processing aids
- As an alternative or follow-up to speaking to the duty manager, write to the head office of the supermarket, outlining the issues you are unhappy about and informing them that you will not buy an in-store bakery loaf until they can guarantee that it is Real Bread.

If you try any of the above, please let us know how you get on.

What the supermarkets should do

Members of the British public have a right to know whether or not the loaves they are purchasing are Real Bread without having to ask a supermarket employee to provide this information. They also have the right to know whether or not a loaf is genuinely fresh.

We therefore call upon UK supermarkets to:

- 1) phase out the use of all artificial additives and processing aids in their in-store bakery and wrapped own-label loaves
- 2) in the meantime, give a full list of ingredients (also naming any artificial additives and processing aids) used in the production of in-store bakery loaves on their packaging and/or shelf displays adjacent to them
- 3) stop using the terms 'fresh' and 'freshly baked' to describe bake-off loaves
- 4) stop using 'artisan' and similar terms for any bakery products that have not been made from scratch using all natural ingredients and traditional techniques by trained and experienced craft bakers

Our invitation to any producer or retailer to add those products that meet the campaign's Real Bread criteria to the online Real Bread Finder remains open.