

# BREAD

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# BREAD

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Email: [contact@insanelyinterested.com](mailto:contact@insanelyinterested.com)  
Web: <http://bread.insanelyinterested.com/>  
Facebook: <http://facebook.com/interested.bread/>

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# WELCOME!

FROM THE BUSY STREETS of Cairo where bakers sell Aish Baladi—a flatbread with a name that means life itself—to India where naan, chapati, and roti are baked in tandoori ovens at every street corner, the bread is flat.

But Middle East and Central Asia are not alone in their love for flat breads: flatbread is where all our ancestors started at when agriculture was new and the culture of bread just being born. Still today, even in the oven spring loving west, many flatbreads have kept a strong foothold—pizza or focaccia, anyone?

RESEARCHING FLATBREADS lead me to a world of bread that I hadn't given much thought to before. Instead of looking at French bakers for inspiration, I was now

pointing my eyes towards the rest of the world. Without leaving my home here in Finland.

IN HIS 2005 non-fiction bestseller, [The World is Flat](#), Thomas L. Friedman argues that by making us more connected than ever, the internet has affected the world, *making it "flat."* In today's globalized economy, ideas, goods, as well as bread recipes flow across borders, leveling the playing field for everyone.

In many ways, that is true: with the help of email, and to some extent, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, we are never more than a click or two away from anyone on the planet.

Anyone with a computer and access to the internet.

When it comes to bakeries in Europe, North America, or Australia, I have no trouble finding the bakers and getting in touch with them. Almost everyone has a web site, and on the site, an email address or a contact form.

This time, things weren't quite that straightforward.

MANY PEOPLE TRAVEL a lot and share their photos and videos online, so it wasn't hard to find photos and videos of bread from all over the world. Watching as bread was made in Kazakhstan, I got close. Looking at a grandmother buying bread for her grandson in Cairo, I could almost taste it.

But the last step of going from looking at the people in those photos and videos to actually talking to them turned out to be a lot harder than I had expected.

Their businesses are not online. They don't have web sites and they probably don't use email either. Their customers live down the street.

LIVING IN THE WEST, it's easy to forget that the buzzing discussion that we see online isn't actually the whole world talking. We are more connected than ever, yet a large part of the world's population still remains outside the reach

of the internet.

Close, almost at our fingertips, but still so far away.

## IN THIS ISSUE

THE MAIN THEME for this sixth issue of Bread is *flatbreads*.

We start our exploration by doing a trip around the world trying to understand what flatbreads are and how they fit into our big picture of bread. We then turn this understanding into ways to tweak our basic bread recipe and bake some flatbread.

As an example of flatbreads, we look at Hemsedal Flatbrødbakeri, a small bakery from Norway focused on maintaining the tradition. And finally, we end our flatbread adventure by baking some Finnish potato rieska.

BUT IT IS NOT all about flatbreads.

Paulo Sebastião shares his experiences from apprenticing at an artisan bakery (as well as a few tips on how to get in), Victoria Harley takes us with her to visit two fine bread bakers, and Jacqueline Colussi tells us about building community between bakers through #BreadChat.

We also continue on the theme of selling bread from last issue by looking at

how teaching bread making works as a business.

I hope you will enjoy the offering I have gathered for you this month!

## GET IN TOUCH

AS USUAL, should you have any questions, comments, or ideas, don't hesitate to get in touch. Send a note to [contact@insanelyinterested.com](mailto:contact@insanelyinterested.com) and we will talk.

I am also slowly working towards adding more writers to the magazine, so if you have ideas, stories, or experiences you would like to share and are good with words, [visit this web site](#) to pitch your article idea.

THANK YOU FOR READING, and happy baking!

— Jarkko





# FLATBREAD AROUND THE WORLD

WIKIPEDIA EDITORS MAINTAIN lists for everything from world events to fictional extraterrestrials. Among these lists you will find the list of flatbreads. 76 varieties of bread from around the world: familiar ones such as naan, pita, and focaccia, and many you might have never heard of such as laxoox, yufka, and bing.

With many regional varieties of flatbreads still missing from the list, it's no wonder if one feels overwhelmed by just the number of breads! But luckily, unless you are an anthropologist looking to understand the tiniest cultural differences

between these breads, you won't have to try them all to know what they are about.

THE HISTORY of flatbreads is rich and dates back to the dawn of civilization, but (maybe for this very reason) when you dig deeper, many of these breads are very close to each other in ingredients and in the way they are made.

Most, if not all, go back to the familiar combination of three to four ingredients: flour, water, leaven, salt. Some skip the leavening, some add oil or milk, and so on, but they are all well within the same

level of variation that we are used to when baking leavened breads.

That's why, in this article, my goal is to not only present you with an overview of the flatbreads made across the world and their relation to each other, but also show how to convert our basic bread recipe into a flatbread recipe.

Surprisingly little needs to be changed.

## UNLEAVENED FLATBREAD

THE EARLIEST BREADS in history were flatbreads made with coarsely ground barley and water and baked on embers or hot stones heated by the fire.

In *Bread: A Global History*, William Rubel writes: "Based on today's archaeology, flatbreads made with bread grains were known at least 20,000 years ago and flatbreads made with other types of starches can be traced back even further in time. While there is no prescribed size, a disc 10-12 cm (4-5 inches) in diameter is always manageable, as is thickness of 3-6 mm (1/8-1/4 inches). When made of wheat and baked on a hot surface, like glowing embers, this bread often puffs up into a ball while baking, and may thus be hollow in the centre. Thicker or thinner breads produce different taste and texture profiles."

He continues to explain that this type of bread is still being made in some of the poorest areas in rural India: "In Rajasthan flour is milled in the morning of baking, sifted through a coarse sieve, then mixed with water, kneaded and made into a thin disk that is baked on a terracotta griddle heated by cow dung until the dough is set. It is then transferred to the embers where it finishes baking."

It's a very simple recipe that leads to a delicious daily bread. One that requires practice to bake right and in which—as no flavor is added by fermentation—the taste and quality of the flour used matters greatly. Fresh, stoneground flour is always a great choice when making bread, but even more so when making unleavened flatbreads.

WITH THAT BACKGROUND information, here is our first flatbread recipe variation.

It's an unleavened flatbread recipe based Rubel's writing on what bread back in history could have been like.

One characteristic shared by many of the earliest flatbread recipes is that the ingredients are presented in an approximate manner—people used the flour they had and didn't worry about detail all that much. In my version below, however, I am using bakers' percentages

*"Flatbreads made with bread grains were known at least 20,000 years ago and flatbreads made with other types of starches can be traced back even further in time."*

as this makes it easier to notice the similarities between this recipe and the basic recipe we have been working with since issue one.

Here you go:

100 % FLOUR

60 % WATER

(2 % SALT)

FOR FLOUR, you can use wheat (bread flour, wholegrain flour, or a combination of both) or some other bread grain, such as barley. Adjust the water amount according to the flour you use. Salt is optional as it wasn't widely available in the early days of bread making.

Mix the ingredients to make a stiff dough and knead well (if you are using a flour weak in gluten such as barley, not that much kneading is needed).

Allow the dough to rest for 20 minutes. Shape the dough into balls of about 100 g each and flatten by hand or with the help of a rolling pin. Leave the breads aside on a floured cloth or surface.

TO TRY AND BAKE the bread on glowing embers or hot stones as they did some 20,000 years ago, you can light a campfire



and enjoy an exotic bread making experience. Alternatively, you can also bake the bread on a baking stone in a hot oven, in a barbecue, or in a cast iron pan on the stove.

If you want to make *chapati*, like the lady from Rajasthan shown on the previous page, don't add any oil on the pan. On the other hand, if you do add oil, you are simply following the lead of the Navajo and making fried bread: fry the bread quickly in a lot of oil, turning the dough around halfway into the baking.

## TORTILLA

THE HISTORY of bread in Latin America doesn't begin with the explorers, but their first discoveries do help us paint a picture of what the early bread in the area was like.

The first bread encountered by the Spanish in 1492 was a flatbread made of cassava. It was a taste that the explorers didn't quite appreciate—or even recognize as bread. The second bread, which the Spanish named *tortilla* (*tortilla* means flatbread in Spanish), made of corn, was received with much more appreciation.

In *Dictionnaire universel du pain*, Esther Katz and Sarah Bak-Geller write

(translated from French): "The consumption of tortilla, in the same role as bread, was for the Spanish a sign of civilization. Later, when they found Maya Indians ignorant of the tortilla—a bread originating from central Mexico—they hurried to impose the food on them."

The Europeans later brought wheat and barley with them to South America, and today, you can find tortilla made with corn or wheat across the continent—with local variations and names, of course. The flatbread is known as *tortilla* in Mexico, Peru and the countries of Central America, *arepa* in Colombia and Venezuela, *beiju* in Brazil, and so on.

The original cassava flatbreads are also still consumed in parts of Latin America.

TRADITIONALLY tortilla is made by cooking and then grinding corn kernels into a dough, which is then baked on an iron griddle. There is however, a quicker and simpler way of making tortilla, using fine corn flour known as *masa harina* in Mexico.

100 % MASA HARINA

60 % WATER

TO MAKE tortilla with masa harina, simply

"The consumption of tortilla, in the same role as bread, was for the Spanish a sign of civilization. Later, when they found Maya Indians ignorant of the tortilla—a bread originating from central Mexico—they hurried to impose the food on them."



replace the flour in our previous flatbread recipe with masa harina and proceed in the same way as with chapati: knead well, shape the dough into thin rounds, and bake quickly on a dry griddle.

IF YOU BECOME interested in exploring the world of tortillas further, here are instructions for [making masa from corn yourself](#).

## FLATBREADS WITH YEAST

AS YEAST CAME TO BE known and white flour became available—even if only to the noble and rich—light, leavened bread became the ideal bread (it was not only considered the more enjoyable, but also the healthier choice!) in most of Europe.

Flatbread was seen as a less than ideal version of bread that you had to settle with if you couldn't afford the really good bread.

Most Europeans couldn't afford white breads, and flatbread traditions continued to develop. The Scots ate oatcakes, Russians had their blini. In Liguria, a flatbread was made of chickpea flour—from what I've read, a taste you have to practice with before you learn to enjoy it.

In the Nordic countries, our ancestors ate crispy (or simply hard) flatbreads made

of oats, barley, or rye. These breads stored well and could therefore be eaten as a staple food throughout the winter. Especially the rye bread was fermented with a sourdough starter.

Soft bread was reserved for special occasions such as Christmas.

IN MUCH OF THE WORLD, leavened breads never gained a similar appreciation and flatbreads continued to be the number one bread up until recent times. India is famous for its naan. The Middle East has pita. And so on.

When yeast was adopted into bread making, bakers didn't stop making flatbreads but instead, used yeast in flatbreads as well. And in the end, many flatbread recipes today are not different from regular bread doughs at all.

In [The Handmade Loaf](#), writing about focaccia, Dan Lepard writes: "The name is now synonymous with the bubbly, open-textured bread that has become a regular feature in artisan bakeries from San Francisco to London, but rarely is this texture seen in Italy. Usually, the bread is simply made with the house white dough, and it is the shape that defines it."

The same is true for other types of yeasted flatbreads.

*"Rarely is this texture seen in Italy. Usually, the bread is simply made with the house white dough, and it is the shape that defines it."*



*"Our next flatbread recipe is simply the same white dough that we have used as the basis for all of our bread recipes in the previous issues of Bread"*

OUR NEXT FLATBREAD recipe is simply the same white dough that we have used as the basis for all of our bread recipes in the previous issues of Bread:

100 % FLOUR

70 % WATER

2 % FRESH YEAST

2 % SALT

ADD A FEW DROPS of extra virgin olive oil and some spices (rosemary, olives, thinly sliced potatoes, or parmesan for example) on top, and you have focaccia.

Flatten, cover with toppings, and bake in a hot oven and that's pizza.

Shape into a leaf shape and cut through the dough with your scraper to make Fougasse, the bread Richard Bertinet always starts his bread courses with.

Changing the recipe into naan is not that complicated either.

### NAAN

TO MAKE NAAN, the famous soft flatbread from India and the countries surrounding it, we again begin our variation with the same basic recipe.





To make the bread softer and for some flavor, we replace some of the water with yoghurt (you could also use oil or butter). Baking powder is also sometimes used instead of yeast—but that's not something I'm willing to do.

100 % FLOUR

60 % WATER

20 % NATURAL YOGHURT

2 % FRESH YEAST

2 % SUGAR

2 % SALT

MIX THE INGREDIENTS and knead for ten minutes until gluten has formed and the dough feels elastic and smooth.

Then, leave the dough to rest for about an hour (more information on when the judging the readiness of dough can be found in [issue three of Bread](#)).

Form the dough into balls (see previous page), and cover with a kitchen towel to wait while you bake them one by one.

TAKE ONE BALL of dough and form it into a tear shaped naan bread by

flattening it first with the palm of your hand and then with a rolling pin.

Bake on a baking stone in a hot oven (250°C / 482°F) for a few minutes until the bread puffs up a little and gets a golden brown color. If you bake too long, the bread will become crusty and instead of soft naan, you will have made pita. This is how closely related many flatbreads are to each other!

After taking the bread out from the oven, brush it generously with melted butter or ghee and move on to the next ball of dough.

Serve immediately with a plate of curry or other spicy Indian food.

FROM INDIA to Central Asia to Caucasus, naan as well as other flatbreads such as lavash, chapati and roti, are often baked in a tandoori oven, which is a ceramic pit with the fire on the bottom.

"The top of the pit, which is the oven, is open and the baker often sits beside the oven opening where he or she can lean into the opening to slap bread onto the side of the oven where it sticks and bakes." Rubel writes.

In an online video recipe from India, I also found instructions saying that you should bake naan on a griddle, directly on top of a gas stove's open fire.

As you can see, possibilities for experimentation are everywhere.

## PANCAKES

DEFINING BREAD—especially flatbread—is not an easy feat. Is brioche bread? How about a croissant? Why or why not? The answer is not that clear and depends a lot on who you ask.

One of the border cases are pancakes. They clearly have a beginning in the early days of bread, and the recipes are not all that different from the flatbreads we have looked at so far.

Take for example *injera*, a sourdough fermented flatbread made from teff flour (wheat, barley, or corn are also used when teff is not available). *Injera* is a traditional food in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and is also enjoyed with another name in Somalia, Djibouti (*canjeero*, *lahooh*), and Yemen (*lahooh*).

The dough is a batter of flour and water that is left to ferment for a few days and then baked on a hot baking surface, usually made of clay and heated on open fire. The resulting flatbread is eaten with stew or salad.

ANOTHER PANCAKE-TYPE flatbread is the Russian blini, originally a food made

and consumed by poor who couldn't afford white flour and had to settle with buckwheat.

William Rubel writes: "Pancakes are a form of flatbread and in some regions of Europe pancakes functioned as a staple bread, notably the French crêpe and the Russian blini." He continues: "Even while they were a staple food of endemic poverty, the crêpe and the blini escaped their sour-batter buckwheat and rye antecedents to find themselves embraced by elite diners."

BLINI, INJERA, NAAN, TORTILLA—flatbreads are rarely eaten on their own, but almost always as a dish for serving other types of food.

This is why, in addition to all the small details in the way the bread is prepared and the ingredients that are used around the world, the accompanying food is a big part of what a specific type of flatbread tastes and feels like.

Rubel writes in a sentiment I can agree with—especially for flatbreads: "You cannot really appreciate the flatbread in Kazakhstan, a pane dolce in Mexico, a brown bread in Germany, a sandwich bread in America, a baguette in France without eating it with people the way they eat it."





# FLATBREAD FROM NORWAY

WHEN WE THINK OF flatbread, we often focus on the Middle Eastern and Central Asian traditions, but there is a strong flatbread tradition also to be found in Europe.

In Norway, until the beginning of the 20th century, the most typical bread was flatbrød. So typical that it was simply called brød (bread) until leavened, oven baked bread started to gain ground in Norway in the 1930s and 1940s.

Flatbrød made from barley flour was the staple food, eaten pretty much at every meal—and even today, it holds a strong place in Norwegian culture.

TOGETHER WITH TWO partners, Mona



Taaje Rusto runs *Hemsedal Flatbrødbakeri A/S*, a small bakery focused in traditional Norwegian breads.

The company celebrates its 25th birthday this year and currently employs five people in addition to two of the owners who work actively in the company. The owners do everything from baking to selling and paperwork—running a small business, you need to be flexible.

The bread from Hemsedal Flabrodbakeri is sold mostly at events and farmers' markets:

"As it is difficult to get into the regular grocery stores, we travel to farmers' markets in Oslo and Drammen on weekends to sell our products." Taaje Rusto says.

"We are also involved in some of the major food fairs in Norway, such as Dyrsku'n and Matstreif, and in the fall, many local fairs. We also travel to Rakfiskfestivalen in Fagernes."

WE CHATTED OVER email, and speaking about the history of flatbread in Norway, Taaje Rusto told me:

"In the past, flatbrød and rømmebrød (sour bread) were made twice a year: in the spring and on Christmas. There were ladies that travelled from farm to farm, baking flatbread. Baking for three to four

days at a farm, they filled up the warehouse for Christmas."

Norway's dry climate made it convenient to stock flatbread, which could then be conserved for years when neatly stacked.

IN ADDITION TO flatbrød, Hemsedal Flatbrødbakeri bakes other types of flatbreads such as rummebrød, potato lefse, and kvikaku.

"Every farm in Hemsedal and Hallingdal had their own recipes for each type of bread. We have landed on these recipes and chosen the ones that we feel taste good and like to work with—and last but not least, that our customers like." Taaje Rusto says.

"The baking is craftsmanship. We believe you know the flavor when you take a bite."

ON THE FOLLOWING pages, Taaje Rusto presents three of the most important Norwegian flatbreads they make at Hemsedal Flatbrødbakeri.

*"Norway's dry climate made it convenient to stock flatbread, which could then be conserved for years when neatly stacked."*





## FLATBRØD

FLATBRØD IS THIN and brittle (thinner than knäckebröd from Sweden).

We roll the dough as thin as we can and then we bake the bread slowly on an iron griddle. The bread has a different taste depending on where in Norway it is made.

Flatbrød can also be made with potato, but we have chosen to make a coarse kind of bread that is also organic.



## POTETLEFSE

POTATO LEFSE is also thin and round, but unlike flatbrød, it is soft.

Lefse is cooked quickly on an iron griddle and is then wrapped in towels and plastic wrap so that it remains soft.

My dad says that potetlefse should be so thin that you can read the newspaper through it!



## KVIKAKU

KVIKAKU IS real traditional food.

In the old days, it was made from milk that was left over or that was going sour. The flour used was whatever was at hand, so the taste was not always the same.

Kvikaku is made with a thin batter that is poured on large round pan and cooked into a pancake.

## RECIPES

ON THE INTERNET, you can find many recipes for the two most famous Norwegian flatbreads: flatbrød and lefse.

To get started, here is one good option for both. For lefse, some special equipment is recommended, but don't let that stop you from experimenting. Even if you don't make your lefse the exact shape of size used in Norway, it will still be close—and a delicious food in its own.

### [Lapskaus med Flatbrød: Norwegian Comfort Food](#)

This recipe is more about Lapskaus, a Norwegian stew, than about flatbrød—mainly because the flabroð recipe is so short! I liked this recipe a lot because of the way it talks about the food, and the country it comes from.

### [How to Make Lefse: Lefse Making](#)

[Instructions in 8 Easy Steps](#): This recipe guides you step by step through the process of making lefse with potatoes.



ON THE THIRD Wednesday of every month, #BreadChat gathers bakers on Twitter to chat about bread. The event, organized by Chicago Amateur Bread Bakers since February 2012, is a lot like grabbing a beer or a cup of coffee with a bunch of friends to have fun and to learn something new about bread making—this time, the friends are just spread across the world.

Every chat has a topic decided in advance and posted on [the #BreadChat web site](#) along with three questions to drive the discussion during the chat. After the chat, a transcript is posted online for those who didn't make it to the discussion.

IF THIS SOUNDS LIKE FUN, join us next time, on May 15th, when the #BreadChat community gathers to talk about the role of steam in bread making.

All you need is a computer and a Twitter account, which you can create for free in a matter of minutes.

# #BREADCHAT

 mist from a pressure sprayer right after loading.  
[View conversation](#)

 **ELB** @esmielovessimon 14h  
@EricFrenchBaker hello can you tell me how to keep my lemon bundt cake from splitting at the top? #breadchat  
[View conversation](#)  
[Expand](#)

 **Eric Duhamel** @EricFrenchBaker 14h  
@Houtoven\_bakker @tiaingle @MortalGreenWhim Like in every oven, you need to keep the steam in. #BreadChat  
[View conversation](#)

 **PacificFrench Bakery** @PacificFrench 14h  
Just made it to #breadchat! Everyone probably wants a wood fire oven even more so after this chat.  
[View conversation](#)  
[Expand](#)

 **The Shipton Miller** @ShiptonMill 14h  
#breadchat Anyone tried the Jamie Oliver Wood-fired ovens?  
[View conversation](#)  
[Expand](#)

 **Simon Thomas** @realArtisan 14h  
#breadchat If you can get a copy Lionel Poilane's " Guide de L'Amateur du Pain" has complete plans for a domestic scale oven in the back.  
[View conversation](#)  
[Expand](#)

 **ChicagoAmateurBakers** @AmateurBakers 14h  
@Houtoven\_bakker Steam contributes to oven spring of loaves, and helps development of a chewy, satisfying crust #BreadChat

I ASKED JACQUELINE COLUSSI, one half of the couple behind both #BreadChat and Chicago Amateur Bread Bakers to share some background and experiences from the first year of monthly chats.

The story starts in 2010, when Jacqueline and her husband, Dado—both passionate amateur bakers—move from Stockholm, Sweden to Chicago to be closer to Jacqueline's family.

**Jacqueline:** DADO AND I had been baking all of our own bread for a few years, and we wondered if in Chicago we would find others who share our passion.

One cold night Dado and I had an idea: what if we started a meetup group dedicated to bakers of yeasted breads?

Would anyone join it?

We decided to give it a try, and a couple of weeks later, in January 2011, I put together the meetup group [Chicago Amateur Bread Bakers](#). If we were lucky, we thought, we might make some new friends in Chicago and meet others who share our passion to become better bread bakers.

WE SCHEDULED the first meeting of Chicago Amateur Bread Bakers at Hendrickx Belgian Bread Crafter, a tiny bakery here in Chicago. Seven amateur

bread bakers showed up.

We were bowled over by the attendance, and by the enthusiasm.

Dominique Schewebach, one of the co-owners of Hendrickx, graciously gave us a tour of the bakery, samples of brioche, insight into the process and history of the bakery's breads, and a croissant each to take home with us.

From there, our group just kept growing. Now, we are 106 bread bakers, approximately a quarter of whom are active participants in our in-person meetings.

OVER THE YEARS, Dado and I have both observed that an ingredient in becoming a better bread baker is the opportunity to interact with other bread bakers, exchanging ideas and information.

With Chicago Amateur Bread Bakers we hold in-person events where bakers meet to taste one another's loaves and to give feedback. These events have been quite rewarding on a small scale: a few dozen bread bakers have benefited from the feedback and inspiration from other bakers.

Back in the autumn of 2011, we started asking how we could scale these meetings up to include more bread bakers around the world—bread bakers who don't

*"Dado and I have both observed that an ingredient in becoming a better bread baker is the opportunity to interact with other bread bakers, exchanging ideas and information."*

necessarily live near to Chicago?

I had been experimenting with Twitter for half a year or so at that point, and I'd noticed that it was a place to meet people who share one's interests. I participated in a Twitter chat called #SeedChat and enjoyed it while learning techniques I could use to benefit my vegetable garden.

Also, I liked the idea of "tuning in" to Twitter at a regular time, to meet up with a group of people—instead of being sort of always tuned into Twitter, which I found mostly distracting.

## #BREADCHAT BEGINS

SO AT THE START of 2012 we decided to begin experimenting with a #BreadChat hour on Twitter, when bread bakers from around the world could ask questions about bread baking and learn from one another.

In our first month, back in February 2012, #BreadChat began as just my husband, Dado, and me. That first month we tweeted back and forth to each other from our two Twitter accounts, @AmateurBakers and @BreadChat. We didn't know if anyone was listening in, and were very much "going it alone."

FOR OUR SECOND #BreadChat in March

2012, I had the idea of asking a professional bread baker to co-host the chat with us. Dado and I are serious amateur/home bread bakers, and we imagined a professional bread baker's perspective could be a compelling complement to the chat.

In looking for a co-host, the first person I thought of was Master Baker Eric Duhamel ([@EricFrenchBaker](https://twitter.com/EricFrenchBaker)). Eric has a way of explaining technical bread concepts succinctly and clearly, which is perfect for the Twitter 140-character format. We asked Eric if he would consider co-hosting the March 2012 #BreadChat, and he was interested.

From the beginning, I felt that Eric really "got" the experimental nature of the #BreadChat project, and was willing to try and see where it took us. That was a gift, a gift of collaboration. Eric has been co-hosting #BreadChat with us every month since.

## WHY #BREADCHAT?

AT THE HEART of #BreadChat is passion for learning as much as we can about bread baking, and passion for becoming better at the bread-baking craft. We like to think we are providing an educational experience, albeit in an extremely limited



and casual way.

From the start, #BreadChat has been an experiment, and it continues as such. We aim to keep the #BreadChat discussion at a fairly high technical level, while also making it approachable to amateur and professional bakers, alike.

For many of us bakers who participate in #BreadChat, we don't immediately understand everything that's mentioned during the chat. That's OK. What we wish for all bread bakers who participate in #BreadChat is that each baker begins to learn something new, or begins to feel curious about a question, or begins to feel motivated to learn more.

#BreadChat doesn't aim to answer all of the questions asked during the chat, but rather to begin to answer them, and inspire bakers to seek out more information on their own. This cycle of asking questions and inspiring curiosity, we repeat each month, and I think it builds on itself.

ANOTHER GOAL is social, of providing a regular time and format during which bread bakers can enjoy one another's company via Twitter. Bread bakers just really seem to like meeting other bread bakers. And #BreadChat is just the beginning of a conversation, we hope.

*"What we wish for all bread bakers who participate in #BreadChat is that each baker begins to learn something new, or begins to feel curious about a question, or begins to feel motivated to learn more."*

We hope that some bread bakers who meet on Twitter may go on to get to know one another and collaborate in other ways.

#BreadChat participants also inspire us with their questions. Each month, we choose a bread-baking topic as a focus for the chat. We like it when the focus topic for the next month's chat naturally evolves from curiosities expressed in the previous chat. So we listen to what people are curious about.

For example, at this month's chat (April 2013) we discussed bread baking in wood-fired ovens. We noticed that two bakers (Bjorn Mateijsen, [@Houtoven\\_bakker](#), from The Netherlands, who's a new participant; and Tia Ingle, [@tiaingle](#), from South Australia, one of our most active #BreadChat participants) were asking questions about humidity and steam, in relation to wood-fired baking.

Inspired by Bjorn and Tia, we chose the role of steam in bread baking as the focus topic for the next #BreadChat (15 May 2013).

## IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE

OVER THE PAST 14 months, hundreds of bread bakers have tweeted to us their enthusiasm for the #BreadChat project.

Bakers often tweet to us, or to one another, about how #BreadChat has helped to introduce them to aspects of the bread-baking craft.

We've also observed new in-person connections being made among bakers who are geographically close to one another.

THE FIRST #BreadChat was just the two of us. The next month—that was March 2012—in addition to us two, 13 bread bakers joined in the #BreadChat conversation. By November 2012, we were 23 tweeting bakers in total. At this week's #BreadChat, 40 bread bakers actively participated.

As I mentioned, Master Baker Eric Duhamel has been with us since the second #BreadChat. So has bakery-owner Sonya Hundal ([@MortalGreenWhim](#)). Sonya is now a regular co-host. Eric and Sonya are both based in the UK.

Miquel Saborit ([@Miquel\\_Saborit](#)) of Barcelona, Spain has been with us since the beginning, and he's one of our most active participants. Turano Baking Company ([@turanobaking](#)), based here in Chicago, has also been active in #BreadChat from the start. So has a home baker named Kristina ([@OnBlank](#)) who tweets from the state of Utah in the USA. Aidan and Lisa Chapman

([@ThePhoenixBaker](#)) in the UK, and Jeremy Shapiro ([@stirthehots](#)) of New York City, USA have also been participating from early on.

So, by the second and third #BreadChat, we felt that we were beginning to realize the goal of a sort of scaled-up, international meeting of bread bakers.

We sometimes wonder how many bread bakers might be silently listening in.



JACQUELINE AND DADO Colussi are in the process of creating an application for bread bakers, called [BreadStorm™](#). BreadStorm is in beta and accepting beta testers.

If you use a Mac computer and are interested in joining the beta test, you can [email the creators](#) for more information.





IF YOU HAVE EVER thought about taking your home baking to the next level, the idea of switching careers and working as a baker probably also has crossed your mind. Acting on the dream of opening a bakery of your own and teaching your neighbors the joys of real bread is a huge jump to take at once, and even just switching jobs can feel scary. But as Paulo Sebastião's example shows, there is a third way.

Originally from Portugal, Sebastião lives in Stockholm, Sweden where he works as an IT consultant. But that's only one half of the story: in the weekends, he apprentices for master baker Mattias Wallmark at *Söderbergs Bageri*.

"For a little more than a year ago, the thoughts of professional reconversion started to stir in my head. I thought the only way I could know if I wanted to become a professional baker was to go and work in a real bakery." Sebastião says.

SOON AFTER coming up with that initial idea, he thought of the artisan bakery ("one of the best bakeries in Stockholm", as he says) near his home and decided it was a great opportunity.

"I discussed this idea with Sébastien Boudet, a friend and inspiration, and he was kind enough to put a good word for



## A BREAD BAKER'S APPRENTICE

me with Mattias. Mattias is a great guy and gladly let me start helping out at the bakery. That was November 2011 and since then I've more or less worked for him every weekend." Sebastião says.

I ASKED this bread baker's apprentice a few questions about the work at the bakery as well as about the things he has learned while at the bakery.



**Jarkko:** Can you tell a bit about your background with bread and how you got excited about bread making?

**Paulo:** I COME FROM a country with a huge culture around bread: Portugal. So in one way or another bread has always been a great part of my life. However, as Julia Child would say, I usually only ate bread but never baked it, until four to five years ago when I moved to Sweden.

I thought the bread offered at the supermarkets was boring and I missed the type of bread we have back home, mostly white 100% wheat bread. So I started baking at home

LIKE A LOT of home bakers I started with Jim Lahey's no-knead bread and then

moved on by buying bread books and baking my way through them.

Sourdough bread became a huge trend in Sweden around 2010 (it still is a big trend today) and that caught my attention and got me into sourdough baking.

You know how the rest of the story goes: bread baking is something you can get very passionate about. I had the luck of discovering that. I guess the engineer in me also loves the whole process and the science behind it.

**Jarkko:** What is work like at the bakery for you? Does it leave you any free time at all?

**Paulo:** WE START WORK at 2 A.M. and usually work until 10 or 11 A.M.

Since we are a small bakery, during these hours I get to do a lot of things and be involved in almost all parts of the bakery work, from production to the front of the house.

Regular days start with baking all the sweet doughs and the breads which are proofed overnight. At the same time, Mattias mixes the rest of the doughs—we do around six to seven doughs—and I get to help with folding and dividing and shaping when the time arrives.

"You know how the rest of the story goes: bread baking is something you can get very passionate about. I had the luck of discovering that."

Most of the time I try to help with all the micro-management, keeping things clean, doing *mise en place*, keeping an eye on the proofing cabinet, keep track on folding times, brewing big buckets of coffee, fixing the couches, etc. We open at 8 A.M. and since we have a huge rush of people storming the bakery, I usually help out in the shop at that time.

Sometimes, I get to score and load some breads into the oven and that fills me with excitement, like a small kid at Christmas.

There's never a dull moment.

I'M NOT going to lie about the free time. Going out on Friday night is something of the past since I need to sleep a couple of hours before going to the bakery and Saturdays I go around the whole day like a zombie. However, since we're closed on Sundays I get the whole day as free time.

**Jarkko:** How has your bread making changed during the apprenticeship? Can you share some lessons in bread making you have learned? What changes when you bake at a bakery compared to baking at home?

**Paulo:** I THINK THE greatest change was the improvement of my bread baking



*"I have learned that we home bakers are usually too gentle with the dough. I'm not saying we beat up the dough at the bakery, but I've learned that it's important to build a good surface tension, and sometimes that comes with a little bit of 'rough love.'"*

senses, if you can call it that: Learning to judge when the dough is correctly proofed or has correct surface tension by touch, knowing when the dough is almost fully kneaded by listening to the sounds the dough produces while revolving around in the mixer, and so on.

I also feel I have better shaping skills now than before I started at the bakery, since I get to practice on dozens of loafs every week instead of the one or two per week I usually baked at home.

Oh, and I have learned how to shape two boules at the same time using both hands!

ONE OF THE first things I have learned is that we home bakers are usually too gentle with the dough. I'm not saying we beat up the dough at the bakery, but I've learned that it's important to build a good surface tension, and sometimes that comes with a little bit of "rough love".

When you're baking at home you're focusing on a couple of loaves, while at the bakery we're talking about some hundreds. Therefore there's always a lot of micro-management going on. You really need to think what are the next steps you're taking. You also need to think a lot about the economy of movement, since losing time is not an option.

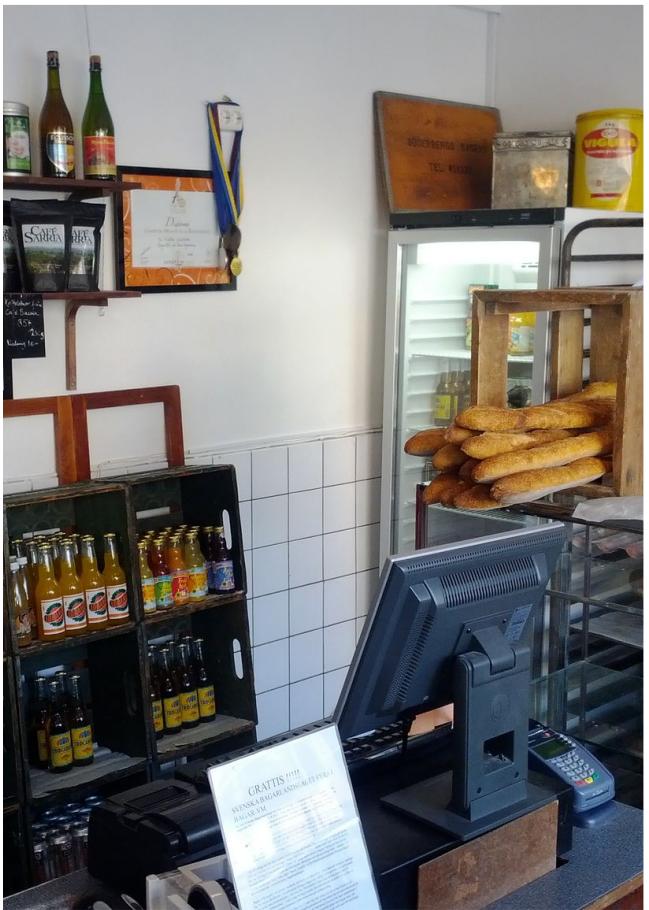
On the other hand it's easier to get consistent results at the bakery because of all the equipment, steam-injected deck ovens, proofing cabinets, etc. At home, we kind of have to improvise on all those things—sometimes with good results, sometimes with not so good results.

**Jarkko:** Was it hard to get up to speed at the bakery when you first started your apprenticeship? I imagine it's quite different from working in your own kitchen?

**Paulo:** WELL, it was hard getting into the routine first. I felt like I was always in the way, literally, since we have such a small bakery.

Nowadays, already when I'm leaving home around 1:45 A.M., I usually start to think about what I need to do when I get to the bakery. What will be my steps, what goes in the oven first, and so on. I still feel like I'm in the way sometimes, but that's just life. While it takes Mattias maybe five minutes to shape 40 breads, in the same time I might shape 10 or something like that so it's natural that I feel like I'm the bottleneck at the production line.

Even though I try to plan a lot, I know that when it comes to the bread part it's Mattias who keeps the machine finely



tuned. I usually picture him as the conductor of an orchestra, orchestrating all the doughs with their different schedules, at the same time managing the oven to have a place for the bread when the dough is correctly proofed.

It's quite a show!

**Jarkko:** Do you have tips for how to get an apprentice position in a bakery? How about for choosing the bakery to apprentice at?

**Paulo:** BAKERIES USUALLY NEED a helping hand, especially on weekends when most bakers want to take the day off, and if you offer your help asking nothing in return it's a win-win situation for both parts. Go there, talk to the baker, show your interest, offer your help and just let your love for bread speak out loud.

FIRST, and most obvious maybe, it's important to chose a bakery that makes bread you enjoy.

Second, try to learn a bit more about how they make their bread - just ask, bakers like talking about their craft. One of the most important things you need to think about is that you get the opportunity to work with the head baker, so you should probably aim for a small bakery.

Working for bigger bakeries is interesting for learning how things are done there from a production perspective, but you'll never get the attention and time from the head baker since there's usually too much going on.

It's also fun working in a bakery with a shop, it's really rewarding speaking with the customers - it's part of the whole charm of baking.

I THINK it's important to try to work in several bakeries and with several mentors. It's a journey on finding your own bread philosophy.

If you only work in one bakery and then open yours right after that, the chances are that it will be a clone of the bakery you apprenticed at. I like the concept of short stages in the kitchen world, where cooks go and work in other kitchens for short periods, and I think the same concept can be easily applied to bread.

**Jarkko:** What do you enjoy the most about the apprenticing? What keeps you going so that you can say that you will be happy doing it for a few more years?

**Paulo:** I LIKE ALMOST every aspect of it! I learn a lot, have a great time while I'm there, and I just love baking besides a

"Bakeries usually need a helping hand, especially on weekends when most bakers want to take the day off, and if you offer your help asking nothing in return it's a win-win situation for both parts."

great skilled baker like Mattias. Seeing him work inspires me a lot. I also have the luck of apprenticing at a bakery with a shop, so it really fuels me seeing the customers storm the bakery on early saturday mornings, speaking with them and hearing how excited they are about a particular bread or how much they enjoyed last week's special bread. It really warms your heart.

Above all, I guess it's my passion for artisan bread, curiosity and desire to learn more about bread that keeps me going.

**Jarkko:** So how do your future plans look like? I noticed a mention of SFBI in one of your blog posts...

**Paulo:** THE IDEA OF professional reconversion is still current, although right now I think I have a good balance in my life with both the baker apprenticeship and regular job. So I will keep it in the back of my head while continuing with the weekend apprenticeship for a few years. I still have a lot to learn which leads us to SFBI, somewhere where I hope to study in the future since I love the work they're doing there and the institute Michel Suas has created.

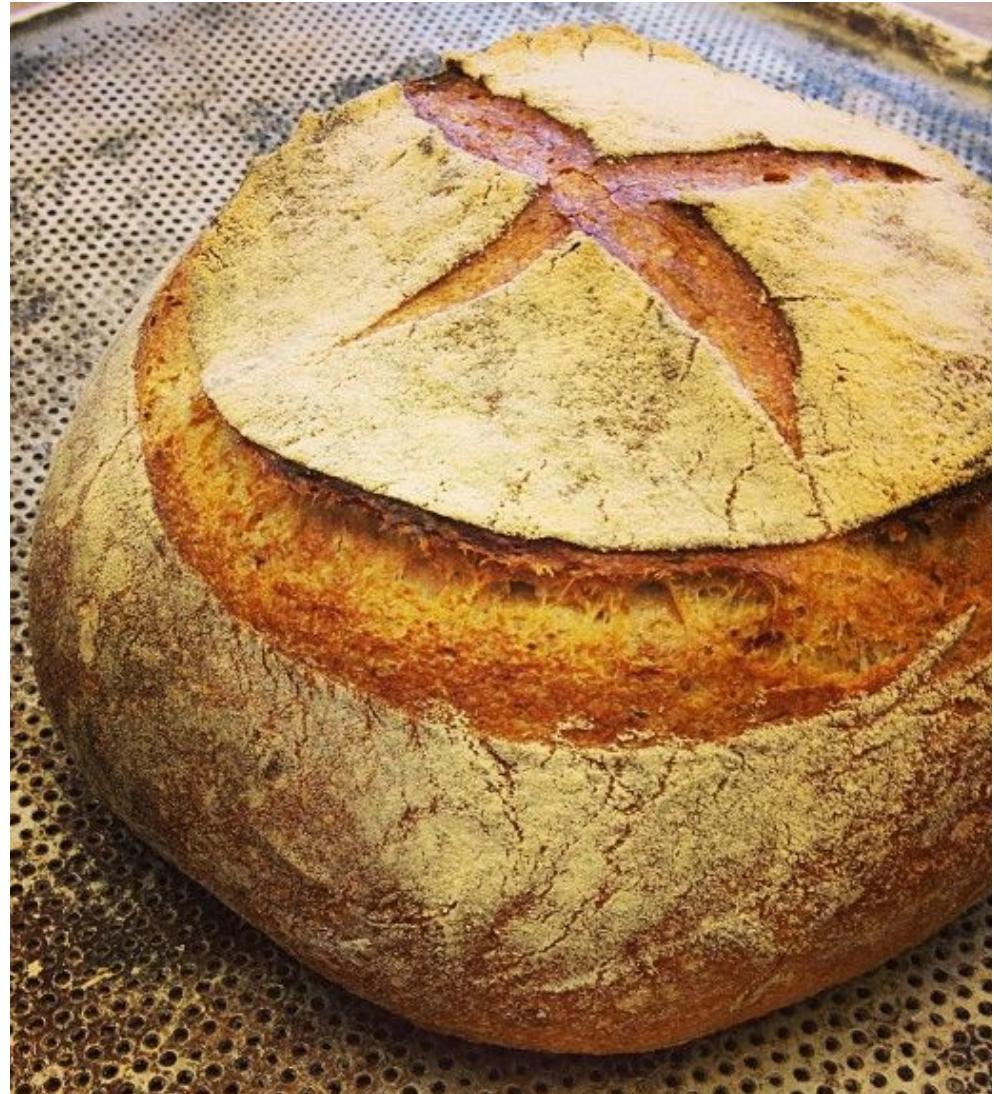
It would quite awesome to work some months in the west coast after I complete

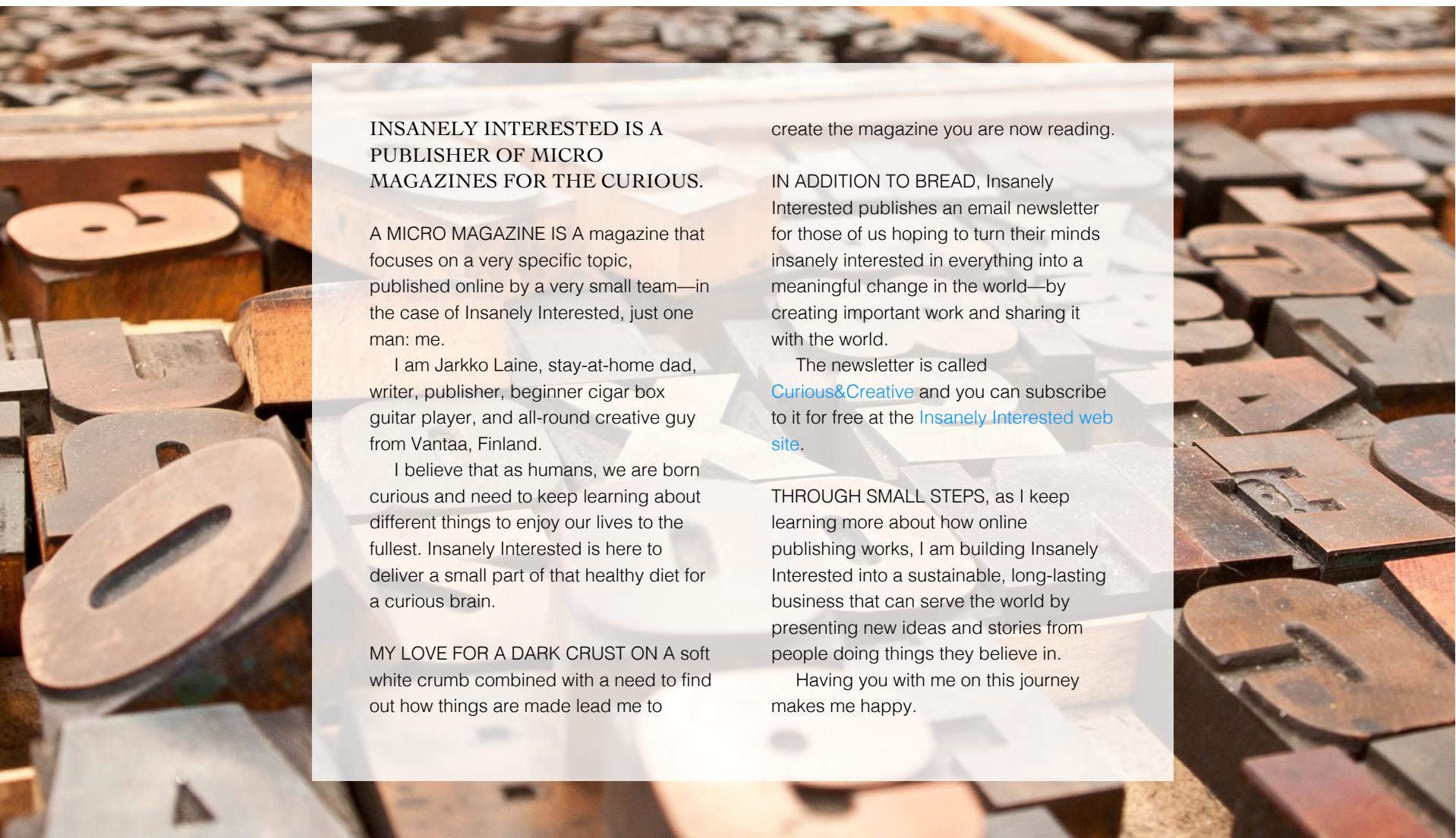
SFBI. There are great bakeries there: Ponsford's Place, The Model Bakery, Acme Bread Company and of course Tartine, just to mention some. I believe that working, or doing a stage, in one or all of these places will help me shape my ideas around the bakery that one day I want to own and the kind of bread I want to produce.

It's the beginning of a journey.

\*\*

FOLLOWING Paulo Sebastião on his journey is not hard as the baker is very active online: you can find him on [Twitter](#), on his two blogs (one in [Swedish](#) and one in [Portuguese](#)), as well as on [Instagram](#).





## INSANELY INTERESTED IS A PUBLISHER OF MICRO MAGAZINES FOR THE CURIOUS.

A MICRO MAGAZINE IS A magazine that focuses on a very specific topic, published online by a very small team—in the case of Insanely Interested, just one man: me.

I am Jarkko Laine, stay-at-home dad, writer, publisher, beginner cigar box guitar player, and all-round creative guy from Vantaa, Finland.

I believe that as humans, we are born curious and need to keep learning about different things to enjoy our lives to the fullest. Insanely Interested is here to deliver a small part of that healthy diet for a curious brain.

MY LOVE FOR A DARK CRUST ON A soft white crumb combined with a need to find out how things are made lead me to

create the magazine you are now reading.

IN ADDITION TO BREAD, Insanely Interested publishes an email newsletter for those of us hoping to turn their minds insanely interested in everything into a meaningful change in the world—by creating important work and sharing it with the world.

The newsletter is called [Curious&Creative](#) and you can subscribe to it for free at the [Insanely Interested web site](#).

THROUGH SMALL STEPS, as I keep learning more about how online publishing works, I am building Insanely Interested into a sustainable, long-lasting business that can serve the world by presenting new ideas and stories from people doing things they believe in.

Having you with me on this journey makes me happy.

# OVEN READY

BY VICTORIA HARLEY

*"We do not see the care and passion that  
he brings to his work. When we wake in the  
morning his fresh bread is ready and  
waiting for us."*



The fire at the Cloughjordan  
Woodfired Bakery is lit by baker Joe  
Fitzmaurice the night before the bake.

I GREW UP in a house where the kitchen was the heart of the home. My parents taught me to eat well and respect the best ingredients, and so I started learning to bake as soon as I could reach the counter top—with the aid of a stool!

I AM a professional photographer but I wanted to learn more about bread.

Starting my quest near to home, I met Phil Clayton, the baker and owner of [The Haxby Bakehouse](#). Phil is a bit like the story of the Elves and the Shoemaker. He works in the night, when we are sleeping.

*"Ultimately, my objective is to produce a book illustrating and celebrating the craft of the baker."*

We do not see the care and passion that he brings to his work. When we wake in the morning his fresh bread is ready and waiting for us.

So, gathering together my natural curiosity, photographic training and a love of great bread, I set about documenting a day (or rather a night) at work for Phil. My initial plan was to create a small photo essay from these shots to tell the story of the baker and his loaf.

I SOON REALISED that no two bakers are the same. The unusual working hours require individuals with a strong character. Each baker brings something unique to the art of bread making. The first set of photographs had captured the character of one baker.

Phil had explained to me in gleeful tones that [Joe Fitzmaurice in Cloughjordan](#), Ireland, was producing some amazing bread with a wood fired oven. So my next step was to contact Joe and arrange a visit. I wanted to add another baker to my collection.

I travelled to Cloughjordan in November 2012, this time documenting the whole process, from collecting the wood, firing the oven through to the finished loaf. The whole cycle took around

36 hours. It was fascinating to see how the local environment influences the making of bread. All the wood for the oven comes from a managed woodland within sight of the bakery.

HAVING BUILT UP a substantial set of images from these two bakeries I want to continue the project. My aim is to document as many real bread bakers as possible across Europe.

Ultimately, my objective is to produce a book illustrating and celebrating the craft of the baker. The heroes of this story will be the bakers responsible for your daily bread.



You can follow the Oven Ready project at [Victoria Harley's blog](#).

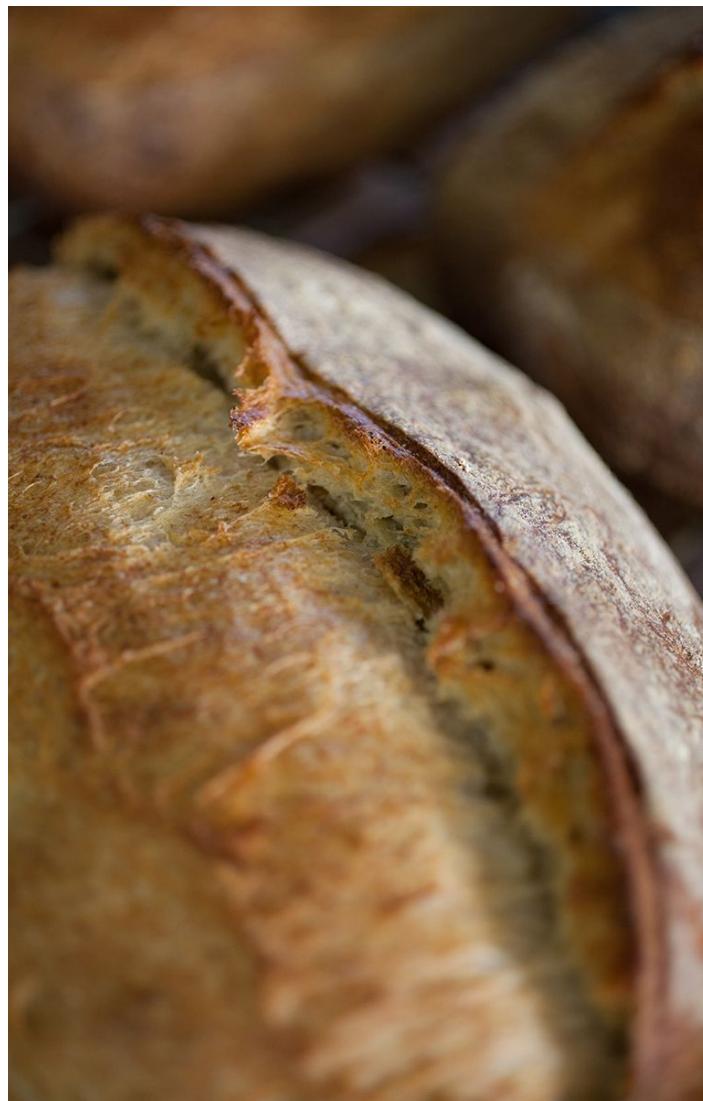


Joe Fitzmaurice of Cloughjordan Woodfired Bakery. Based in the Cloughjordan Eco-village he specialises in Sourdough, spelt and rye breads.



**Left:** Phil Clayton of The Haxby Bakehouse kneels beside his mixer keeping an eye on the consistency of the dough.

**Right:** Phil shaping the dough of his Yorkshire Mill loaf.



**Left:** The Seeded Haxby Cob from  
The Haxby Bakehouse

**Right:** The beautiful crust of a  
Cloughjordan Sourdough

# GET PREVIOUS ISSUES



If you missed the first year of Bread, [click here to download the full 2012 package](#) and complete your collection.

# TEACHING BREAD MAKING

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"AFTER 30 YEARS working in an office—most of that at the University of Sheffield—I took the chance to leave and start-up my own business creating something with my own hands, ideally, at home."

For Mick Saxton, owner of [Saxton's Home Bakery](#), creating something with his own hands meant baking bread, and so, in 2011, he set out to bake sourdough bread and sell it to his local community.

"I attended a few short courses and practised a great deal, and also went through all the essential business setup requirements. Eventually in May 2011, I advertised an 'open day', baked a range of breads and buns and hoped to attract neighbours."

THE DAY WENT WELL and Saxton found his first regular customers, soon to become his "small band of loyal customers."

However, growing the customer base wasn't easy with competition from a high street artisan bakery nearby on the one hand and the difficulty imposed on customers from having to place orders in advance to buy bread from Saxton's micro bakery.

Saxton decided to look into teaching. "Last year (Summer 2012), I decided to

begin offering classes to teach people how I go about baking. These classes have been really well received and my wife and I have really enjoyed meeting a wide range of people and sharing their excitement at learning how to bake great bread." Saxton says.

A quick look at the list of bakeries that participate in the Real Bread Campaign in Britain confirms that this is an emotion shared by most artisan bakers in the country. Almost every artisan bakery from tiny home bakeries such as Saxton's to bigger brands like Hobbs House offer courses in addition to selling their breads to customers.

For an artisan baker looking for ways to grow the business, teaching bread making is well worth exploring.

FOR DAN AND JOHANNA McTiernan, the reason for starting a bakery came from an interest in sustainability and slow food.

"We were interested in ideas around good food, slow food, the transition towns movement, which is all about trying to create resilience communities despite the fact that peak oil and climate change will happen whether we like it or not. We were thinking a lot about those issues and decided that bread was something we

*"For an artisan baker looking for ways to grow the business, teaching bread making is well worth exploring."*

*"It happened very quickly. We were thinking of initially just starting something for Johanna so that she could earn a part-time living."*

enjoyed making and was quite an important thing really. It's the basis of huge amounts of the world's food cultures." Dan McTiernan says.

In 2008, this lead to founding [The Handmade Bakery](#), one of Britain's first community bakeries. Today, the company employs 18 co-op partners and makes a turnover of 250 000 to 300 000 Pounds a year, but those numbers weren't how the company was started in the first place:

"It happened very quickly. We were thinking of initially just starting something for Johanna so that she could earn a part-time living. Our son was two years old and Johanna was thinking of going back to work—and didn't want to go back to what she was doing. But after we started the bakery, it really quickly grew beyond a part time job for Johanna." McTiernan says.

TEACHING BREAD MAKING became a part of the work at The Handmade Bakery almost immediately. First, the McTiernans were teaching themselves, and very soon, also volunteers who wanted to work at the bakery.

"The way we learned was by learning from the internet, YouTube, and going on some short courses that other people



were teaching. And obviously lots of practice—and reading lots of books." McTiernan recalls.

"So we were kind of simultaneously apprentices and master bakers at our own bakery. We didn't feel confident enough to teach other people for a while, formally. Although actually, informally, we were teaching straight away because we very quickly found that lots of people wanted to come and volunteer. So in that sense we have taught from the beginning."

Formally, teaching courses became a part of The Handmade Bakery's business about a year after starting the bakery. And after a while, separated into a business of its own, [The School of Slow](#), owned by the McTiernans.

MCTIERNAN AND SAXTON both agree that teaching is an important part of the business. As artisan bread is very labour intensive, it's hard to make a healthy profit from selling bread alone.

For example, The Handmade Bakery is able to pay the salaries and make a little profit from the baking, but needs the courses to save money for the future.

"You make more money teaching than you do baking bread, unfortunately. It's definitely more profitable. Which is good

and bad really. Most artisan bakeries that are starting in the UK are also trying to run courses to help with their profits." McTiernan says.

For Saxton, teaching is also a big part of the business.

"Teaching takes up much less time (currently 2 - 4 times a month) than baking bread for sale but does bring in a great deal more income, and so is vitally important if I'm to make the business viable in the long term." he says.

TEACHING MIGHT NOT be for everyone, but if you enjoy meeting new people, have the organization skills, and enough experience in bread making, it could be for you.

"To enjoy teaching bread-making you need to enjoy meeting and communicating with new people. It can be hard work bringing some people out of their shells and, on the other hand, keeping some people focused on the class timetable! But there is so much to learn from exposure to so many people it is a very satisfying and stimulating experience." Saxton says.

"Seeing the pleasure people get from baking their own gorgeous loaves is very enjoyable and never gets boring!"

*"Seeing the pleasure people get from baking their own gorgeous loaves is very enjoyable and never gets boring!"*

## MAKING IT WORK

TO START TEACHING BREAD MAKING you need to plan a course and then find people who want to learn from you. Many are looking for courses:

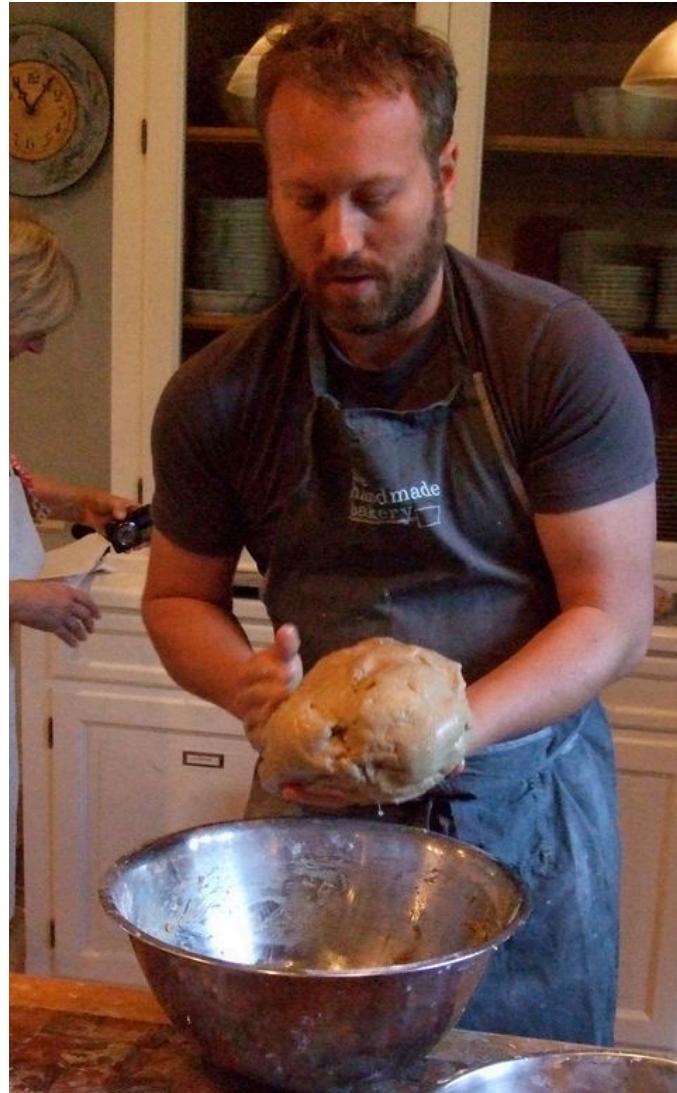
"Most people who have come to me have found me just by Googling for bread making classes. I am on a couple of bread and general food related web sites but the vast majority of students have found my web site directly by just using Google." Saxton says.

That isn't to say that anyone could just set up a course and start teaching. Having at least some experience is important in order to give a useful learning experience to the customers.

As McTiernan says, "to have some credibility to teach, you need to have been a practitioner in some way. I think it's fair enough to bake for markets or something like that. That kind of scale is fine." And not only for getting customers but also to be able to enjoy the teaching yourself.

"It helps with your confidence obviously." McTiernan says.

A GOOD DAY of bread making practice begins by making students feel at home and relaxed. After that, it's a good idea to



*"Then we have a quick look at the recipes, and start—very quickly really. I think that's the best way: rather than talking too much, just get mixing."*

get their hands into dough as soon as possible. After all, baking bread is what people come to the courses for.

Saxton offers both one day and weekend courses. The one-day workshop begins at 9:15 A.M and lasts until 3:30 P.M, including a lunch break. Weekend courses organized together with a local bed and breakfast run from Friday evening to Sunday morning.

McTiernan's School of Slow offers only one-day courses that run from 9:30 to 4 P.M.. As the bread made is slow fermented, some preparation, such as feeding the sourdough starter is done in advance, so that when the students arrive in the morning, they can get kneading right away.

"People will come in the morning and have breakfast, some croissants and coffee, and then we'll talk about what we are going to do. I introduce myself and explain what we are doing. Then we have a quick look at the recipes, and start—very quickly really. I think that's the best way: rather than talking too much, just get mixing." McTiernan says.

"We have 12 people in a course and we've got two big tables so there's six people around each table. We've laid out all the bowls and the scales, and then they

just start measuring the ingredients. We go through it step by step and get kneading straight away and then just talk more casually while we are kneading."

Saxton's classes are run in his own kitchen, and therefore are smaller in scale—one or two people at the time.

"The pros of having such small groups is that it is easily manageable in terms of dough preparation (overnight pre-ferments etc.) and also you have a chance to really get to know your students and relate in a very informal and enjoyable way. This last point can figure as a small 'con' also as it can be quite intense interacting all day in your own home with people who until that day you'd never met before; getting over initial reservations (from both sides) can be a hurdle but has always been quickly achieved so far." Saxton says.

FILLING THE TIME as the dough proves can take some time to get right. Saxton says that on a one day course, eating a slow lunch and talking about bread making theory are good ways to spend that extra time productively, but that he still hasn't quite nailed the perfect schedule:

"I do some of the Sourdough theory

stuff in the afternoons and talk about recipes. I also do a little demo to kill some more time. This is an area I'm still looking to improve on as it can be difficult to keep everyone going after lunch!"

MCTIERNAN AGREES that balancing the course contents and finding a good flow is something you have to work at before it flows perfectly.

"It took a while to get that right. To make the timing work. We have got it quite well structured now." he says.

"On the basics course, they work with two doughs, so we knead the two doughs back to back. It takes people a lot longer than it will take you at home once you have practiced, to weigh the ingredients and knead. So, it can take an hour to knead the first dough.

It's a bit quicker with the second one but by the time they finish kneading the second dough, their first one is ready to fold or degas, and then you can talk about that for a while, and I tend to then demonstrate with a piece of overnight dough while we are waiting for the doughs to catch up. I show some shaping with this piece of dough, and then I do it again with the actual dough I have prepared with them."

The only down time on McTiernan's courses is at the end of the class when the last breads are being baked and there is nothing more left to do.

"There might be half an hour with not much to do, but you can use that for packing the other loaves you have made and asking final questions, like 'what books would you recommend?', 'where you can buy equipment?', and those kind of questions." McTiernan says.

## FUTURE PLANS

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE Saxton says he is working to improve both his bakery and the bread making courses. The two support each other, bread bringing more attention to the courses and vice versa. Saxton says:

"This year I do need to keep the classes coming and raise awareness of what I'm doing. I also need to try new ideas to increase the customers for my bread so that I'm baking as efficiently as possible during my baking sales days. I may try to develop products that could go into cafes to give me an extra angle."

He concludes by telling that while baking and selling bread from home is satisfying, it needs baking classes to support the business financially—that is



unless you are able to work in bigger quantities or find a very devoted customer following.

"Developing baking classes can give a whole new level of personal satisfaction and provide the knowledge that you're giving something really useful to people in terms of their own health and well-being. Classes can also be financially successful, but making people aware of what you're offering is a challenge." Saxton says.

FOR MCTERNAN, his family, and the School of Slow, the future is even more of an adventure.

To dig deeper into their passion for slow food and sustainability, Johanna and Dan McTiernan are currently moving away from The Handmade Bakery, and relocating to Spain where they have bought a slow food farm. They plan to bake bread in an outdoor wood fired oven and run courses, but also grow food—olives, almonds, and cereal, as well as sheep and goats.

"The School of Slow will be running courses exclusively with the Handmade Bakery until next March, and after that we will be running our own courses separately." McTiernan says.

TO SUPPORT THE CHANGE in direction, The School of Slow launched an online course just after Christmas. The course, [Artisan Bread Basics Online](#) is growing slowly but will probably be an important part of the business in the future.

"I think it will be good. It's just that because I have been busy doing other things, I haven't done enough investment in marketing. We are selling, but we are not selling hundreds yet. A couple every week, or so, which isn't a lot but it's selling, and the people who have done the course have given us some feedback and have been happy with the course.

I think I naively thought we might sell a lot quicker with less effort but that wasn't the case. I think it will be important for us." McTiernan says.

It's early to say, but there is definitely potential, and what better way to live out an adventure!

*"Developing baking classes can give a whole new level of personal satisfaction and provide the knowledge that you're giving something really useful to people in terms of their own health and well-being."*

# NOW, DO IT YOURSELF

HERE ARE some practical tips for starting your own bread school (or simply doing one course to share some of your love for bread making).

**1 — PLAN.** Do your homework and schedule the bake day in a way that you have something to add or remove when things don't go exactly as planned. Pay attention to the time when the doughs are resting. Participating in a bread making course organized by someone else is a good way to see what works well and what could be done better. Research bread making courses to see what kinds of breads are offered and how the classes are priced.

**2 — KEEP THE COURSE ENJOYABLE.** When creating a new course, it's natural to feel that you need to teach everything you

can fit in a day to make sure the customers get value for their money. This can lead to a lot of stress and anxiety both for you and the students. As Dan McTiernan says, the course is not only for learning but also "an experience, a fun day out."

**3 — MAKE YOURSELF FOUND.** When people need something, they search for it on Google. So, you need to have a web site. Make the site clear, containing the basic information on you and your courses. Add good, realistic photos to show that your business is real and can be trusted. Then go ahead and tell everyone you know, inviting them to tell their friends on Facebook, Twitter, and face to face.

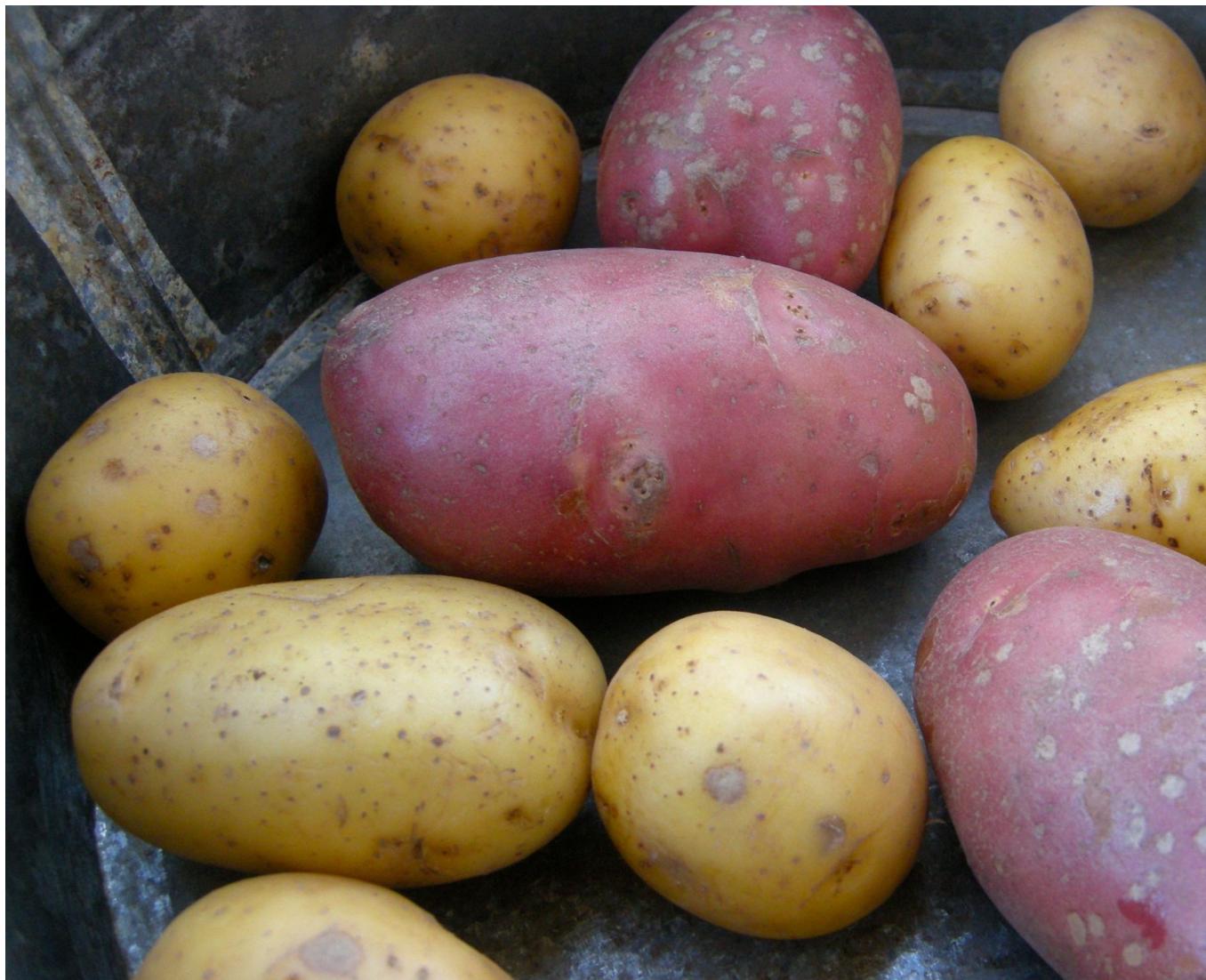
**4 — OFFER A GIFT CARD.** Mick Saxton says that many of his customers are people who have been bought a gift card

by their relatives who know about their interest in bread making. If you don't offer this option, you are leaving many potential customers "on the table."

**5 — THINK ABOUT ONLINE.** Bread baking is a craft that cannot be learned without hands-on practice. However, if you can provide good material in video, audio, and text, you can reach a bigger audience with a one time effort. It is not the same as teaching a real life bread making class but as The School of Slow has noticed, it is an addition with a lot of potential.

**6 — TRY AND REPEAT.** After all the planning, what's left is trying it out for real. Do it once and see how it goes. Then, if you like it, keep what works, fix what doesn't, and try again.





## POTATO RIESKA

BEFORE WE FINISH WITH this issue of Bread, let's get all practical and bake one last type of flatbread, *rieska*.

Rieska is a relative of the Norwegian flabread, *lefse*, that was mentioned earlier in this magazine, but with its unique variations—variations which are many even within the borders of Finland: There is rieska made with just barley, a version with potato. Some mothers make it with sourmilk.

This recipe is my version, built on the basic recipe that can be found in every bag of barley flour sold in Finland and inspired by a delicious rieska that is baked and sold at Eat&Joy Maatilatori in Helsinki.



POTATO RIESKA is a common way to deal with left over mashed potatoes. This is why the best way to make the bread is to cook a big pan of mashed potatoes, eat some with meatballs, and only then use the rest for bread making.

Take the remaining mashed potatoes and add milk to make the mixture quite soft, almost batter like. How much milk is needed depends on the consistency of your original potato mash.

Rieska can be made without leavening



and with nothing but barley as flour, but I like to add a bit of strength and fluffiness, so I have replaced half of the barley flour in the recipe with bread flour and added a pinch of yeast to get some fermentation going.

600 G MASHED POTATOES

400 G MILK

250 G BARLEY FLOUR

250 G BREAD FLOUR

10 G FRESH YEAST

10 G SALT

1 EGG

MIX ALL OF THE INGREDIENTS in a bowl and knead the dough on the table for a while. The dough is very sloppy and it can be hard to keep together, so you will have to use a scraper to scrape the dough into



a ball every once in a while. Don't worry if you feel that you aren't able to build up a lot strength in the dough, but it's still a good idea to keep kneading for at least 5 minutes. This will make the dough easier to handle when you are shaping the flatbreads.

Return the dough to a bowl for its first rise. Cover the bowl with a cloth and let the dough ferment for 45 minutes.

Place a baking stone inside your oven and heat the oven to 250°C (482°F).

WHILE THE OVEN IS heating, use a spoon to scoop dough from the bowl. Place the dough on a heavily floured table and use your hands and the flour to shape it into a flatbread about 1 cm (0.4 inches) thick.

The breads can be quite small (about 10 cm or 4 inches wide) or quite big, depending on your preference.

Place the breads on a floured couche to rest for about 30 minutes more, or until the oven is ready for the breads.

BAKE THE RIESKA in a hot oven for about 10 minutes or until it gets a golden brown color.

Enjoy fresh with butter.

YOU HAVE JUST finished reading the sixth issue of Bread! I hope you found entertainment, inspiration, and information on these pages.

I want to take this last page to thank everyone who has been involved in making this magazine come true: the people interviewed on the pages above as well as the photographers who have made their art available for projects such as this one. And you, the subscriber, who have given me the permission to explore the world of baking and share my findings with you.

The journey continues in the next issue, in our kitchens, and [on Facebook](#) in between issues.

\* \*

IF YOU HAVE a good story to tell, baking experience to share, and are good with words, I would like to hear from you.

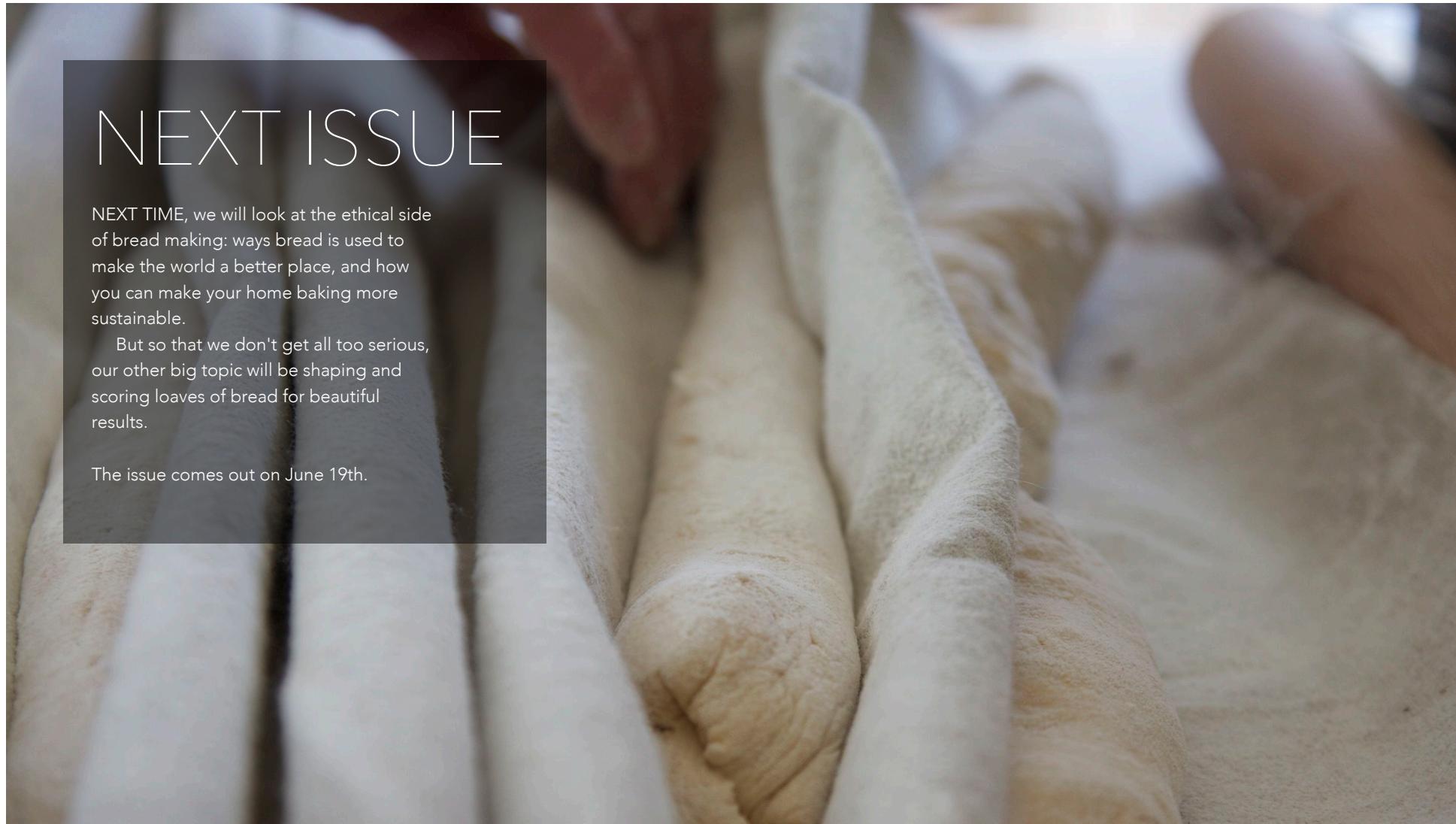
Check out [this web page](#) for more information and a form for pitching your article to the magazine.

# NEXT ISSUE

NEXT TIME, we will look at the ethical side of bread making: ways bread is used to make the world a better place, and how you can make your home baking more sustainable.

But so that we don't get all too serious, our other big topic will be shaping and scoring loaves of bread for beautiful results.

The issue comes out on June 19th.



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