

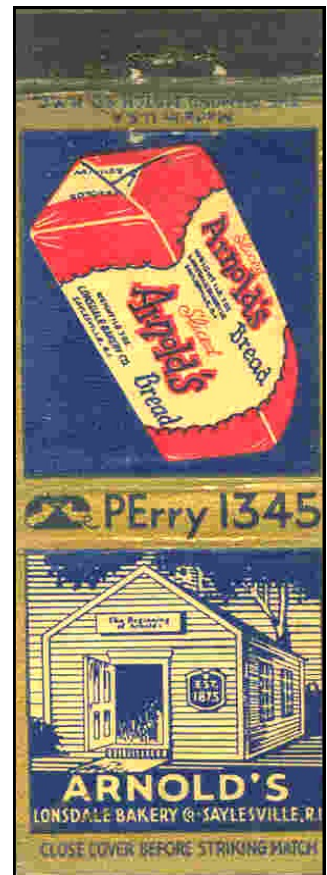
Bread

The history of bread goes back at least 30,000 years. The first bread produced was probably cooked versions of a grain-paste, made from roasted and ground cereal grains and water, and may have been developed by accidental cooking or deliberate experimentation with water and grain flour. Descendants of these early flatbreads are still commonly made from various grains in many parts of the world, including lavashes, taboos, sangaks, Mexican tortilla, Indian chapatis, rotis and naans, Scottish oatcake, North American johnnycake, Jewish Matzo, Middle Eastern pita, and Ethiopian injera.

Flat bread of these types also formed a staple in the diet of many early civilizations with the Sumerians eating a type of barley flat cake, and the 12th century BC Egyptians being able to purchase a flat bread called ta from stalls in the village streets. The ritual bread in ancient Greek offerings to the chthonic gods, known as psadista was made of fine flour, oil and wine.

The industrialization of bread-baking was a formative step in the creation of the modern world. Otto Frederick Rohwedder is considered to be the father of sliced bread. In 1912, Rohwedder started work on inventing a machine that sliced bread, but bakeries were reluctant to use it since they were concerned the sliced bread would go stale. It was not until 1928, when Rohwedder invented a machine that both sliced and wrapped the bread, that sliced bread caught on. A bakery in Chillicothe, Missouri, was the first to use this machine to produce sliced bread.

For generations, white bread was the preferred bread of the rich while the poor ate dark (whole grain) bread. However, in most western societies, the connotations reversed in the late 20th century, with whole grain bread becoming preferred as having superior nutritional value while white bread became associated with lower-class ignorance of nutrition. *[Hey! I prefer white bread!]*



Another major change happened in 1961 with the development of the Chorleywood Bread Process which used the intense mechanical working of dough to dramatically reduce the fermentation period and the time taken to produce a loaf at the expense of taste and nutrition. The process, whose high-energy mixing allows for the use of inferior grain, is now widely used around the world in large factories.

In total contrast, traditional bread making is extremely time-consuming, as the dough is mixed with yeast and requires several cycles of kneading and resting in order to become ready for baking, and to produce the desired flavor and texture.

More recently, and especially in smaller retail bakeries, chemical additives are used that both speed up mixing time and reduce necessary fermentation time, so that a batch of bread may be mixed, made up, risen, and baked in fewer than three hours. Dough that does not require fermentation because of chemical additives is called "quick bread" by commercial bakers. Common additives include reducing agents such as L-cysteine or sodium metabisulfite, and oxidants such as potassium bromate or ascorbic acid.

Often these chemicals are added to dough in the form of a prepackaged base, which also contains most or all of the dough's non-flour ingredients. Using such bases and sophisticated chemistry, it has been possible for commercial bakers to make imitations of artisan and sourdough breads, traditionally made by semi-skilled laborers working in smaller shops. [http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_bread]

It's interesting that the term 'bread' has also been used as a slang term for money...perhaps because both are considered basics.

