

July, 2015



This is the first in what I hope will be a very long series of regular newsletters. I'll be including little nuggets of bread related information, sharing answers to some of your questions, and offering brief updates on what's been happening and what's planned.

This last month my bread has been stocked by **Sally White's** at Kennington Cross. I deliver "just baked" loaves at 8.30am every Saturday Morning. Baking regularly in the early hours is new to me, but I'm enjoying it. And the positive effects: Fresh Bread first thing Saturday for Sally White customers and earlier collections elsewhere for those of you it suits.

My first summer of regular baking has arrived as has the hottest July day "since records began". At Heathrow. What can I say. It's been hot. With the ovens running for six to twelve hours, the typical temperature is 30° or more. But with a slight breeze and particularly good batches of **Stoate's Organic** stoneground flour I've really enjoyed myself. Heat typically speeds the fermentation, so reducing the water temperature is critical; it allows time for the enzymes to do their thing: Better flavour and healthier bread. I deliberately don't use a fridge or a "retarder" to keep the dough artificially cool. Whilst many bakers do (if only to make life easier), I prefer the challenge of nature and the seasons. Bread *is* seasonal.

The **Roots and Shoots** project continues. The "April Bearded" wheat has been growing nicely, though Greg at Roots was disappointed with the lack of Poppy Flowers in the corn field edging. Andy Forbes of **BBA** (who donated the seed) and I gave talks to some of the Roots students (and teachers). Andy on Heritage and Landrace grains, myself on the evils of processed bread and all the positives of "real bread" and sourdough in particular. Thankfully everyone preferred my various breads to the Tesco Finest White sliced I'd also brought along, though someone who shall remain nameless (Travis) gave the pap 6/10 in Greg's taste questionnaire. The unsalted French butter went down a treat as well! Our next task is to plan the harvest and milling. And then a little bread baking. All of which I am really looking forward to.

September is also "**Sourdough September**" and being heavily promoted by the Real Bread Campaign (part of Sustain) of which I'm a member. I'm planning various activities, but I'd most like to bake some "special" breads. I have an idea for a harvest bread or two, but I'd value any and all of your suggestions and requests. Let me know next time you see me or, better still, **give me a call or mail me**.

Croutons! Croutons make a lovely addition to salads, not just soups. If you've a couple of slices left just fry them gently in a little olive oil until golden. And perhaps still a little chewy in the middle. Delicious. My favourite is Salade Lyonnaise.

Keeping bread. Real bread slowly dries out. Wrap it tightly in a tea towel or freeze it. A fridge will speed the dehydration. An old loaf can be briefly resuscitated with a quick splash of water all over and a couple of minutes in a hot oven.

Coming soon: Rye crisp bread, Focaccia & Breakfast Rolls

John – Kennington Baker