

“Jeronimo!”

With that cry I started baking and selling bread in March of this year. It feels like I’ve been charging along ever since! I have enjoyed every minute; the challenges, the occasional disappointment, the constant learning, the progress and, above all, you.

A few of you have asked me how old my leavens (starters) are, and, I think, very much like the idea that some bakeries have mother leavens going back two hundred years. I believe we all like that there is a tangible connection to the past, especially with traditional and proven methods that seem to produce healthier, tastier and altogether more satisfying bread.

Unfortunately, the grains, and in particular, the wheats that are generally available to bakers around the world are not traditional and have a tenuous link to the past. Modern wheat is cultivated to support industrial farming methods and industrial baking processes. Flavour and health are not a consideration. The UK baking industry, who own most of the commercial mills, seem, in concert with successive governments, to believe that the public is happy to eat dead white powder with no flavour, no texture, and no natural nutrients or minerals. And no clear or comprehensive labelling of ingredients on their products. I think they are wrong.

DEFRA maintains a list of **approved grains for commercial use**. The oldest wheat on that list is Maris Widgeon from 1964. New cultivars are constantly added as each new variant inevitably succumbs to pests and disease. But our health and well being is not a consideration. Similarly, modern yeast (regardless fresh, dry or fast) is a travesty.

Living and baking in Lambeth, a borough with exceptionally high levels of diabetes and obesity, I am convinced that real bread can and should be a part of the solution to healthy living. And heritage wheat has a key role to play as does organic and biodynamic farming. Andy Forbes of **Brockwell Bake** together with **Roots and Shoots**, **Lambeth Larder** and **Edible Lambeth** will continue to receive my support, even if it’s only some muscle for sowing and harvesting grain.

I’d like to thank everyone for their support over the year. In particular, special thanks to Neil, Nichola and all at **Little Bread Pedlar** in Bermondsey, Ilaria & Roy at **Jamyang**, Charlie & team at **Italo**, and everyone at **Sally White’s** and **Mazi Mas**. And Flora.

My thought for the holidays: What does “local” mean.

Coming soon: A brief baking break from the 24th. I will be back baking for 7th January. Refreshed and with a plan for premises and much else besides.

Have a fantastic break and a healthy, happy and prosperous New Year.

John – Kennington Baker