

# SUNDAY

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INSIDE

LIFE HOME FOOD INGEAR



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Real bread bakeries are on the rise | p21

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# FOOD

## HAVE YOU HERD?

The Burren in Co Clare is now a top foodie destination P24



KATY  
McGUINNESS



Is the quest for gluten-free food killing the baking business? The renaissance of real bread-making in Ireland suggests not

# RISE OF THE REAL LOAF

**T**here is a New Yorker cartoon by Trevor Spaulding featuring two women sitting at a cafe table while deciding what to order from the menu. "I've only been gluten-free for a week," says one to the other. "but I'm already really annoying."

Poor old gluten. It's getting a terrible press these days, being blamed not just for coeliac disease, but for a host of other complaints, from bloating to auto-immune conditions and even autism spectrum disorders. It needs to get itself a good publicist.

The chances are that you have dabbled with a gluten-free diet, too, not because you are coeliac (less than 1% of the population is), but because you are trying to eat clean (whatever that is) and carb-free.

You may reckon that if you steer clear of bread and pasta, then all your niggling health problems will disappear and you will lose a stone without even trying.

When you are not sticking with the clean eating, though, you are able to indulge in the tempting breads and sugary confections being peddled by the slew of new bakeries that has appeared around the country in recent times, their shelves groaning with carb-porn. Are they a sign that a backlash against the gluten-free movement has begun?

At Krüst Bakery, on South Great George's Street in Dublin, the owners don't have much truck with the gluten-free notion. "That wouldn't really be our kind of thing," says Garret Flower, who met his business partner, Rob Kramer, an Austrian, at Dublin Business School where the pair set up an entrepreneurs' society.

"If anyone's looking for gluten-free, we send them to Antoinette's Bakery, on Kevin Street. She's cool."

Flower and Kramer started out

Fermenting ideas Garret, left, and Kramer, are set on expanding their bakery shops

→ making Austrian-style pastries for cafes around Dublin, but soon realised that they could not bake them well enough in the kind of quantities that they needed, so they hired contract bakers.

"Now we supply Applegreen service stations nationwide," says Flower, "and we've more than 500 customers. We're the fastest-growing bakery brand in the country. We opened a shop on Aungler Street to expand the brand, and we've opened another on Georges Street. We're looking for another shop now."

Flower describes Krúst as a speciality bakery. "Ours is a speciality niche and we've lots of different flavoured breads, such as ciabatta flavoured with chilli or roast onion, and a large range of sourdoughs," he says.

Flower reckons Krúst is the biggest supplier of doughnuts in the country, and it has developed an expertise in baking "cronuts", a doughnut/croissant hybrid. "People came in asking for these things that they'd seen in New York, and one of them was the cronut, created by Dominique Ansel. So I went over to have a look and queued up at six in the morning to get my hands on some.

"We don't fill ours, so the texture is very light. The most popular flavours are Oreo, and caramel and flake, and we've just introduced two new ones: mocha, and strawberry and coconut."

Krúst's focus is on expansion, says Flower, who hopes that the company's smart-bakery concept, which uses technology in every aspect of the business, including accepting bitcoins for purchases, will help it to achieve that.

"All the machines are linked online and when the bakers and baristas come in in the morning everything is ready, so we save thousands of euros in energy costs each year. The technology tells us how many units of each product to make each day to minimise waste, and any surplus is donated to a charity for the homeless."

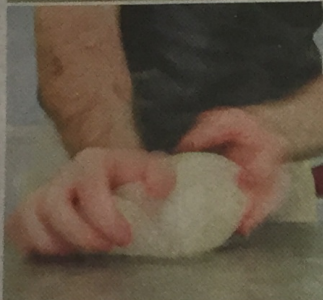
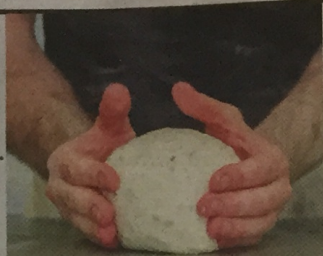
At the other end of the spectrum is Sarah Richards, who runs the Seagull Bakery from a chalet in her garden in Tramore, in Co Waterford, making mainly sourdough breads.

Richards supplies local shops, including Ronan's Full & Plenty Farm Shop in New Ross in Co Wexford, and Larder in Waterford. She also sells to restaurants, such as the Tannery in Dungarvan, Co Waterford, and Momo in Waterford, as well as farmers' markets.

She doesn't cater for the gluten-free market either. Richards doesn't believe that gluten is the problem that many people think it is. "I've known dozens of people, myself included, who thought they were gluten-intolerant, when it's the modern process of bread-making that's to blame," she says. "When people start eating real bread, their problems disappear. Gluten has been done a terrible injustice."

She may have a point. Just look at the list of ingredients on the wrapper of a supermarket loaf – even the "healthy, wholegrain brown bread with added chia seeds" you have been buying is laden with artificial additives.

In its simplest form, bread comprises flour and water, and fermentation is promoted either by adding yeast or using natural fermentation. Sometimes salt is added to enhance flavour. And that's it. Real bread is made without flour-improvers, dough-conditioners, preservatives, chemical leavening – such as baking powder or bicarbonate of soda – or any other artificial additive or pre-mixed ingredients.



#### Slow movement

The industrial process is all about speeding things up, whereas making real bread is all about slowing everything down, says Ryan, above, who demonstrates kneading dough at the Firehouse Bakery and Bread School

Until the early 1960s, most bread, apart from traditional soda breads, was real bread. It was kneaded by hand, left to "prove" or ferment, ideally more than once, for anything up to a couple of days, and then baked for 40–50 minutes. Making real bread is a time-consuming, labour-intensive process.

Then along came the Chorleywood Bread Process, which sounds as though it should be a quirky spy thriller starring Benedict Cumberbatch, but is in fact a way of making bread fast.

Researchers in the UK found that if you used lower-quality flours you could employ machines to knead dough. They discovered that adding vegetable fat, along with processing aids, oxidising agents, emulsifiers, additives and "improvers", meant that fermentation times could be substantially reduced.

**Yeasted breads irritated my stomach. Sourdough bread goes down so much easier – it's a life-force food**

On top of that, they found that you could bake loaves at a higher temperature much more quickly and that the bread would last longer before going mouldy.

The process meant that you could make a loaf of bread far faster than real bread and with much less human effort. Within a few years, the vast majority of bread for sale in Ireland, particularly in our supermarkets, was made this way.

"The industrial process is all about speeding things up, whereas making real bread is all about slowing everything down," says Patrick Ryan, of the Firehouse Bakery and Bread School, in Delgany, in Co Wicklow.

"Time is one of the most important ingredients, because it allows the nutritional value of the flour to be released and the flavour to develop. One of the biggest reactions we get from our customers is that our bread actually tastes of something."

Bread that is fermented quickly is harder to digest because the gluten is stronger and the varieties of wheat suited to mechanical mixing also have a stronger gluten content. The flour used to make mass-produced bread is mechanically milled at high speed, which strips it of most of its natural nutrients.

## Upper crusts

### Riot Rye

Based in the eco-village of Cloughjordan, in Co Tipperary, Julie Lockett and Joe Fitzmaurice produce bread using organic flours, natural and wild ingredients, and sustainable production methods. They have a bread school, too. [riotrye.ie](http://riotrye.ie)

### Fallon & Byrne

The Dublin retailer has a state-of-the-art bakery at its Exchequer Street premises and makes bread for its shop and two restaurants using only flour, water, yeast and salt, plus natural flavourings. Try the seaweed bread. [fallonandbyrne.com](http://fallonandbyrne.com)

### The Butler's Pantry

From its in-house bakery in Bray, Co Wicklow, the Butler's Pantry produces authentic bread, without additives or preservatives, which is then sold in its shops across Dublin and Wicklow. Tasty. [thebutlerspantry.ie](http://thebutlerspantry.ie)

### Tartine

Thibault Peigne's Tartine bakery in Swords is the real deal, making organic breads that have flavour and texture. There are no gimmicks, just great bread, which you'll find in independent food stores. [tartine.ie](http://tartine.ie)

For more, see [realbreadireland.org](http://realbreadireland.org)



Flour powered Sarah Richards runs the Seagull Bakery from a chalet in her garden

# Over to you

For those intimidated by the idea of making bread from scratch, Patrick Ryan advises you not to panic if the dough seems too sticky to begin with – just keep kneading and it will sort itself out. As for the temperature of the water when you are adding the yeast, Ryan says it is best to think of it as if you were feeding a baby and have it tepid, but never too hot. Finally, to make the sourdough bread, you need a homemade starter. Find Ryan's own recipe for a basic sourdough starter online at [bbc.co.uk/food](http://bbc.co.uk/food).

## CRANBERRY AND WALNUT SOURDOUGH

Makes 2 loaves  
**What you will need**  
 500g/1lb 1oz strong unbleached white

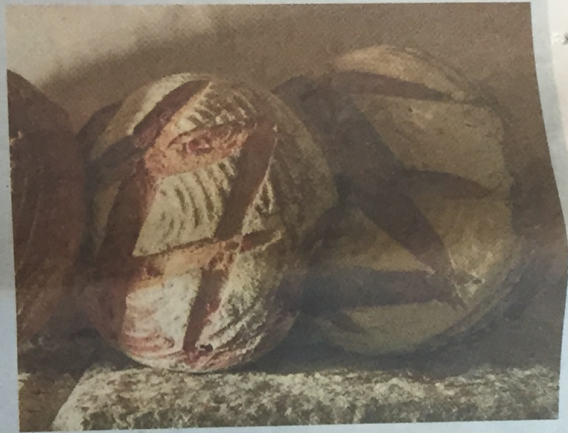
bread flour	10g brown sugar
175g/6oz sourdough starter	275ml/9½ fl oz water
10g salt	30g/1oz walnuts
	30g/1oz cranberries

### How to prepare

Mix flour, starter and water in a bowl. Add salt and sugar. Turn out onto a surface and knead for about 10 minutes until soft and elastic. Add walnuts and cranberries and knead for a further two minutes to distribute them, then put into a lightly oiled bowl. Cover with a damp tea towel and prove for 2½ to 3 hours.

Turn out dough and knock back. Shape dough into a tight ball (cob loaf) then place, seam side up, in a bowl lined with a clean tea towel that has been floured generously. Leave to prove for a further 2½ hours, then place in fridge and leave overnight. Remove 1½ hours before baking.

Preheat oven to 230°C/gas mark 7 and place a roasting tray in the bottom. Turn the loaf out onto a baking tray or hot baking stone. Flour, score or glaze as required and put in the oven. To create steam in the oven, place some ice cubes in the roasting tray. Bake for 35 minutes until a good crust has formed and the loaf sounds hollow.



Stoneground flour, which is made using the slower, traditional method, retains more nutrients and is easier to digest. In the industrial process, fat is added to help the bread hold its shape, something that it doesn't do naturally because of the fast fermentation.

Richards is convinced that slow-fermented sourdough breads are better for health. "I found that yeasted breads and shop bread irritated my stomach," she says. "After eating shop bread I'd feel rotten, and I'd go into a slump that would last for a few hours. Sourdough bread goes down so much easier – it's a life-force food."

"The flavour is a big thing, too. Anything with fermentation is tastier. In bread that's made quickly, the gluten is elastic and hard to digest. With a two-day fermentation, it's as if the bread is pre-digested."

Ryan also suggests that gluten may not be the problem. He, like Richards, is a member of Real Bread Ireland, a network of craft bakers that aims to promote consumer awareness of real bread production across the country.

"There are bakeries all over Ireland masquerading as artisan bakeries, when they are using just as much crap as the industrial producers, making bread as quickly and cheaply as they can," he says.

"Their bread is baked in industrial units and they use pre-mixers, additives and preservatives. Not all the ingredients have to be listed, so some of these bakeries are making what they call 'sourdough', but it isn't true sourdough, because it uses commercial yeast."

"It's fashionable, I suppose, and because terms such as 'artisan' and 'natural' can be used by anyone, the consumer is very confused. You can market it any way you like, but in the end people are able to taste the difference."



## HAZELNUT, OAT AND WALNUT BREAD

Makes two loaves  
**What you will need**  
 500g/1lb 1oz strong white flour  
 1 heaped tsp salt  
 1 tbsp honey

10g fresh yeast (5g of dried yeast)	50g/1¾oz oats
330ml/11 fl oz tepid water	25g/¾oz hazelnuts
50ml/1¾ fl oz olive oil or rapeseed oil	25g/¾oz walnuts
	2 x 400g/1lb loaf tins or 2 round proving baskets

### How to prepare

Mix flour, oats, and salt in a bowl. Crumble and dissolve yeast and honey in the water, then add to the bowl with the olive oil. Bring the dough together with your hands or a spatula, then turn out onto a clean surface and knead for about 10 minutes, until soft and elastic. Add the nuts and knead for two minutes to distribute. Place dough in an oiled bowl, cover with a damp tea towel or wrap in cling film and prove for 60 to 90 minutes, or until doubled in size.

Turn out the dough and knock it back, then divide into two and shape into two loaves. Roll in oats to coat and place in loaf tins or proving baskets. If you using a proving basket, place loaves seam side up and prove for a further hour.

Preheat oven to 220°C/gas mark 7. Place a roasting tray in the base. If using proving baskets turn dough out onto a baking tray and cut a cross on each loaf or place loaf tins into the oven and pour water from a boiling kettle into the hot roasting tray. Bake for about 30 minutes.

## BLUEBERRY ALMOND SWIRLS

Makes 12  
**What you will need**  
 For the dough  
 450g/1lb strong white flour  
 5g salt  
 50g/1¾oz sugar  
 100g/3½oz softened butter

265g/9 fl oz milk	25g/¾oz white flour
10g yeast	2 eggs
1 egg	Few drops almond extract
For the almond paste	For the filling/topping
125g/4oz softened butter	1 punnet blueberries
125g/4oz caster sugar	100g/3½oz flaked almonds
100g/3½oz softened butter	

### How to prepare

Mix flour, salt and sugar in a bowl. Rub in softened butter until mixture resembles fine bread crumbs. Make a well in centre.

Warm milk, just enough to take off the chill. Crumble the yeast, dissolving it in the milk. Pour into the well. Add the egg. Bring the dough together with your hands or a spatula. This should be a soft, supple dough. Turn out onto a clean surface and knead for about 10 minutes. Put into an oiled bowl, cover with a damp tea towel and prove at room temperature for about 90 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the almond paste. Blend butter and sugar until pale and fluffy. Add ground almonds, flour, eggs and almond extract and combine.

When the dough has proved, transfer it to a lightly floured surface and knock it back. Then roll into a rectangle about 1cm thick. Cover generously with almond paste, then scatter with blueberries. Take the side furthest from you and roll towards you. Roll the dough up to create a tight spiral.

Cut into 12 portions, a little over 2.5cm thick, place on a baking tray lined with parchment, cover with cling film or a damp cloth and leave to prove for another 45-60 minutes. Preheat oven to 190°C/gas mark 5.

Brush each swirl with egg wash, top with flaked almonds and bake for 15 minutes. Cool swirls on a wire rack.

