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The bread

Language
English

The bread is one of the most ancient foods, developed in Mesopotamia from the domestication of wild wheat. The making and storage of bread enabled an extraordinary revolution related to the sedentariness of the human communities.It is one of the core foods of the Mediterranean Diet.Various rituals go along with the making of bread and its use is sacralised since the early days of Christianity in the Eucharist, in the shape of host and symbolic body of Christ.

The bread is made of flours mixed with water, especially wheat, but also rye, barley, oat and corn. It is cooked, after being kneaded, in high temperatures ovens. There are numerous varieties and ways of making bread, leavened or fermented and unleavened, white or wholemeal, corn bread… The biscuit, the “bread of the sea”, was known to the Greeks and Romans and it was a main food in the Portuguese’s travels around the world in the 15th and 16th centuries.

From the Americas came the corn which in Portugal became adjusted to particularly wet climates and enabled the emergence of a new kind of bread.The paintings of previous centuries portray the rural life related to the bread cycle, the harvesters, the mowers, the millers, the oven owners, the bakers and many scenes of rural life.

The meadows and the corn fields are still part of the Portuguese landscape, nowadays, as well as the windmills, water mills and tide mills. In Portugal there are cyclical festivities, such as “*Dia da Espiga*”, (the spike day) “*pão dos pobres*”, (bread of the poor) the offering parades in “*tabuleiros*” (trays) in Tomar or Espírito Santo (Holy Spirit) in Azores.

In the Algarve there are also many varieties and qualities of bread and the ovens are always present in rural houses.

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