

Bread

A Staple for Centuries

By Grace Greenberg



Peanut butter and jelly, ham and eggs, turkey with stuffing – sound familiar? These are inseparable pairs. What holds them together is – BREAD. November is National Bread Month, so let's praise the stuffing. Along with the turkey, Thanksgiving has always served bread products with importance at the table. After all, bread, it's essential.

So, what's Thanksgiving without turkey and all its accompaniments. Among its delectable side dishes for this traditional American holiday, squeaking past mashed potatoes and cranberry dressing, turkey's number one sidekick is the homemade stuffing. Some have considered this the signature dish of note when boasting about the success of their holiday dinner.

Bread from ancient infancy

One of the oldest prepared foods dating back to the Neolithic era, the first breads were flat, made of a grain-paste made from ground cereal grains and water. Bread may have been developed accidentally by cooking or deliberately experimenting with water and grain flour. Descendants of these early breads are still made from various grains worldwide. The basic flat breads formed a staple in the diet of many early civilizations with the Samaritans eating a type of barley flat cake, and the Egyptians of the 12th century B.C. able to purchase flat bread called ta from stalls in the village streets.

Leavened bread can be traced to prehistoric times, too. Yeast spores occur everywhere. Dough left to rest will become leavened naturally. Airborne yeasts could be harnessed by leaving uncooked dough exposed to air for some time before cooking. Parts of the ancient world that drank wine instead of beer used a paste composed of grape juice and flour that was allowed to ferment, or wheat bran steeped in wine, as a source for yeast. A piece of dough from the previous day was used as a form of sourdough starter.

Bread, the essential wonder of the world

It can be said that civilization began when ancient man discovered a food that could keep through the winter months and could be multiplied in the summer. Today, bread is still the main staple all around the world. In Spain, bread is called "pan," with more than 315 different types. In Britain and the United States, the most widely consumed is soft-textured with a thin crust sold ready-sliced in packages. In India, Pakistan, and other South Asian countries, roti or chapati flat breads are commonly used. Puri is a thin flat fried bread that puffs up while cooked. Paratha is baked in brick ovens.

Traditionally, Jews bake challah, an egg-bread with a very thin crust and a soft, well-leavened center and is sometimes sweetened using honey and raisins. In Morocco and West North Africa, a round bread four inches tall is used to eat most Mediterranean watery cuisine. Rghifa is a thick, chewy fried bread smothered in oil, which is a staple in Morocco's food.

In Scotland, plain bread is tall and thin with burned crusts at the top and bottom of the loaf. Plain bread has a much firmer texture than English and American pan bread. In

France, pan bread, pain de me, is used only for toast or for making stuffing; standard bread like baguettes and thicker breads has a thick crust and airy inside. Focaccia is popular in Italy and southern France, known as fougasse or fouace. Typically, seasoned with olive oil and herbs, this bread is topped with cheese or stuffed with meat or vegetables.

Germany and then Chile are the two biggest consumers (per capita) of bread. "Breaking bread" stems from the religious context of the Last Supper breaking bread with Jesus to sharing a meal in a social setting. Enjoy the tradition of breaking bread across the world as an essential component to any dining table.

DID YOU KNOW?

"The best thing since sliced bread" refers to having exceptional qualities. It is a compliment for something to be compared to the bread slicer. Otto Frederick Rohwedder, the father of sliced bread, started in 1912. His first efforts met with resistance from bakers who informed him that the sliced bread would quickly go stale. By 1928, Rohwedder had finally designed a slicer that wrapped the bread. The Chillicothe, Missouri Constitution-Tribune of July 7, 1928 carried a story of the new machine's first use at the Chillicothe Baking Company in Missouri.



Nutritional Value

Bread contains many of the group B vitamins vital for the digestion system and helps the body use energy properly. Whole meal bread contains more of these vitamins than white bread. Two very important Vitamins, B1 Thiamine and B3 Nicotinic Acid, help the body grow, help the body obtain energy from food, and keep the nervous system healthy. Bread is very important for poorer countries for a daily supply of these vitamins since the body cannot store them. Beri Beri and Pellagra comes from the lack of the B group vitamins. The most important mineral that bread supplies is calcium to help build healthy bones and teeth. Calcium is important in helping to form a blood clot if your skin is injured and helps keep the nerves and muscles healthy. Iron is also present and it is essential for making blood.



Basic Stuffing

Ingredients

Loaf of bread, (white, French, challah) dried and trimmed of the crust

2 onions, chopped fine

1/4 C oil, butter, or margarine

1/2 C water

1 stalk celery, chopped fine

Salt and pepper for taste

Option: herbal seasonings: parsley, sage, ginger, and others, according to taste preferences.

Method

Let the bread become dry by leaving uncovered overnight. Cut crust and discard. Tear it in little pieces of approximately one-inch squares. Place in mixing bowl.

Add sautéed onions in the liquid to the bowl. Add chopped celery. Gently mix the ingredients using tongs or by hand. Sprinkle with a little water to moisten all the ingredients together. Place spoonfuls of the mixture in the cavity of the turkey and seal with tin foil. Put the extra in a baking dish covered with aluminum foil for approximately 30 minutes at 350 degrees. It's ready when the stuffing is moist.

The History of Bread

Stone Age	Simple bread-like cakes made from stone-crushed barley and wheat – possibly the beginning of farming communities.
4000 B.C.	Egyptians, known as “bread eaters,” first discovered the process of leavening bread and other principles of baking, which was an art form then.
2600 B.C.	The British Museum proudly exhibits 5,000-year-old loaves in tombs for the afterlife. It takes being a “bread lover” to a whole new dimension
168 B.C.	On to Rome. The first bakers’ guild, Colligium Pistorum, was formed, which created a profession of the only tradesmen who were not slaves.
100 B.C.	Romans had perfected the milling process and made white bread, It had more than 200 bakeries by then. Even temples had their own bakeries.
<i>Visit www.grainpower.org, the official site of the Grain Food Foundation.</i>	

Leftovers for a great sandwich

Developed by Ted Allen on behalf of the Grain Foods Foundation

Ingredients:

2 thick slices of challah (egg) bread, toasted
2 thick slices left over roasted turkey
2 Tbs cranberry sauce
2 Tbs mashed sweet potato
1 tspn chopped fresh sage

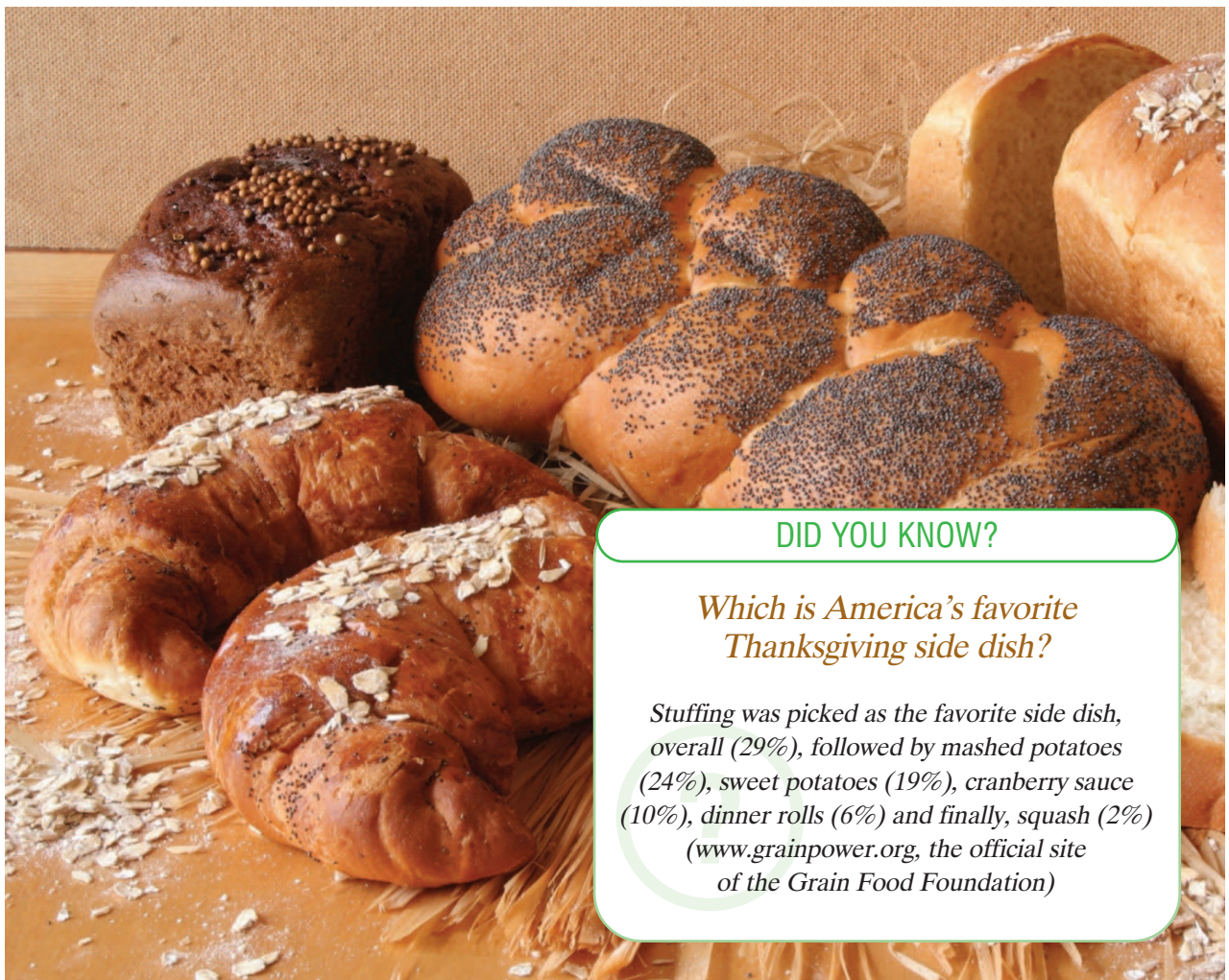
Method:

Lay the two slices of challah toast side by side; spread the cranberries on one slice and spread the mashed sweet potato on the other slice. Sprinkle with fresh sage, then place the turkey on the cranberry side; top with the sweet potato side and cut on the diagonal and eat a wonderful treat of leftovers.

Energy and Digestion



Bread is a main source of calories that provides heat/energy for the body to use and they can be stored as fat for future use. The energy comes from the starch, which turns into sugars to provide fuel for everything we do. Bread contains fiber from the outside skin of the wheat, which helps the digestive system, particularly for elimination.



DID YOU KNOW?

Which is America's favorite Thanksgiving side dish?

Stuffing was picked as the favorite side dish, overall (29%), followed by mashed potatoes (24%), sweet potatoes (19%), cranberry sauce (10%), dinner rolls (6%) and finally, squash (2%) (www.grainpower.org, the official site of the Grain Food Foundation)