

What makes Cook's Fresh Market breads taste so great? Is it the recipe? The oven? The flour? What's the secret? Honestly, we're just baking bread the good old-fashioned way. Alright, the hand steam-injected oven, the unbleached, unbromated natural flour, natural sea salt and our homemade starter all contribute to the flavor of our breads. Yet, we bake them according to the same methods used 100 or more years ago. While the technology has changed, the process remains the same - we adhere to the standards our ancestors put in place: time and quality ingredients. And plus, when you love what you do, the difference always comes out in the taste!

The Flavor

Why is a good loaf of bread so hard to find these days? Every store and bakery labels their breads "artisan" or "hearth baked". In fact some of these places use mixes or slap their labels on loaves made by commercial bakers. Although it might sound good, the truth comes out when you smell, chew and taste the product. So how can you tell when a bakery is trying to pull the wool over your eyes? When a baker is trying to rob you of your well-earned money? Try it! Ask for a taste! Actually, demand a taste. If they are as proud of their bread as we are of ours, they'll be complemented by your request. Why? Because great bread tastes great; the flavor is rich, hearty, natural, and smooth. It calls you back for more, because you just can't get enough. And, it should never have the flavor of preservatives, sour acids, or chemicals. The flavor is the most important aspect of a great loaf of bread.

The Crust

The crust of the bread is another indicator of flavor. The crust on a traditional loaf of bread is both utilitarian and delicious. From a practical standpoint, it protects the inside of the loaf. Although kids prefer to cut it off, the crust adds enormously to the flavor of the bread. As bread bakes, the natural sugars in the dough caramelize, leaving the crust sweeter, toastier and nuttier than the inside of the loaf. Aesthetically, crust brings contrast in terms of both texture and appearance, all of which add to the complexity and character of good bread. A good crust is either chewy or crackling crisp and if you press it, optimal crust will give you a nice crunch, or at least a good bit of resistance. How crisp the crust of the bread may be at the time of purchase may depend greatly on the weather, as humidity adversely effects the crust. Luckily in Colorado, we have a semi-arid climate that doesn't effect the crust very often.

Check out the color of the crust as well as its texture. The best tasting loaves are almost always significantly darker in color. Don't be scared off by chocolate brown or nearly black crust color in spots. If the baker is good, this isn't "burned", it's beautiful and it will taste better, balancing the flavor of the crust and the crumb, enhancing the natural sweetness of the flour. A beautiful traditional loaf of bread,



burnished brown on the outside, has a solid but not impenetrable crust, slightly blistered with tiny natural fermentation bubbles that say, this is a loaf of integrity, a loaf made with care and time.

The Aroma

The aroma is another way to evaluate the flavor of bread. Good bread should smell good; at least as good as it tastes. We don't mean the aroma of warm loaves, fresh out of the oven; they almost always smell good. Instead, we're talking about bread that has a chance to rest and set up, for even a day or so, out of the oven. It should smell like wheat, rye or of the natural sour starter used to make the bread. In breads made with natural starter, you should smell a pleasant and distinctive, though not overwhelming, sourness, just like it tastes. Does it smell like yeast? Then, this is the sign of loaf lacking flavor. Yeast-like, little or no aroma is likely to mean little or no flavor.

Time is Money

What is the key to baking bread loaded with "I just gotta have more" flavor? If there's one secret to bakers who bake for flavor and bakers who bake to collect a pay-check, it's time. If there is a single "secret" to Cook's Fresh Market bread, it's time. One of the major differences between baking traditional artisan loaves and baking bread that only looks like it, is the willingness of the baker to wait. To bake better tasting natural bread, it takes time and patience. But the rewards are great. It's hard to describe

just how much difference time can make in a loaf of bread. But just like the old saying goes, “good things come to those who wait” and no matter what we try differently or how other breads taste, we always come back to the same place we started: there is no substitute for time.

At Cook’s Fresh Market, we work hard to take our time - especially, in this day and age when everybody is rushing and bustling, trying to make the most of their time. And although we spend a lot of time measuring, mixing, and shaping, the most precious time is when our dough just sits around and waits. Just sitting around might not sound very exciting, but we know the end-result will make us want to kick off our shoes and dance around the mixers a bit. Because while it sits around, our dough snacks on the natural sour starter we feed it throughout the night, it rests, nourishes itself and builds character and complexity. All this time and waiting just adds to the end-result: a big, beautiful, full-flavored loaf that we can use to sop-up our Mom’s sauce, or enjoy with a bit of cheese and wine at a picnic in the park, or even as a little crusty morsel topped on a delicious Caesar salad. It’s time that makes great bread such a treat to eat.

All of our breads spend at least 16 hours proofing slowly, and some more. So, how do those “just collecting a pay check” bakers jump on the express track and still collect a toll? Well, while we’re hanging out with our dough, they’re trying to grease the wheels to

get home a little earlier. And their answer to faster bread is commercial yeast. But we put the brakes on yeast, because it means less time, which means less flavor.

So what’s the scoop with yeast? Yeast is a naturally occurring bacteria that is found in flour and floats in the air. Yeast makes little air pockets in the dough – making it rise and giving the bread crumb texture. We developed our starter over three years ago, and still use it in almost every loaf we bake. We hand-selected organic grapes that naturally developed acidic bacteria and wild yeast over a 20 day period. However, this naturally beautiful process, used over centuries of bread baking, takes time. So those bakers who are in a rush, use today’s substitute for time - commercial yeast. Now, there’s nothing wrong with a little commercial yeast in your baking, especially if you don’t have the time to develop a starter. However, the problem with commercial yeast is when it’s used excessively to shorten the time dough rests and bakes in the oven. Sure, commercial yeast will make your dough rise like a helium balloon. However, more yeast means less time which means less flavor. At Cook’s Fresh Market, we often bake our bread without the addition of any yeast at all. **And the difference is in the taste.**

Cook’s Fresh Market
8000 East Belleview Avenue, Suite E-20
Greenwood Village, CO 80111
303.741.4148
www.cooksfreshmarket.com

ABOUT OUR BREADS



We asked the Bakers at
Cook’s Fresh Market
why our breads taste so
great. And this is what
they said...