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# The Sourdough Difference 01

## *The difference between today's bread and bread from the past, and how we can avoid wheat related allergies and illnesses*

There is significant evidence that the cumulative changes over the past 120 years in the way we eat certain basic foods have had fundamental health consequences for everyone. The widespread problems associated with wheat products are reaching epidemic proportions. These days, most people know someone who has a sensitivity or allergy to wheat.

For the past fourteen years, my central focus has been to explore every aspect of wheat production and the foods made from it. The most important factor is that our ancestors prepared gluten grains (wheat, rye, spelt, etc.) by first grinding, then naturally fermenting them prior baking. This process went hand in hand with the discovery of systematic agriculture 10,000 years ago and was practiced throughout the ages, from the Sumerians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Europeans, to the pioneers of North America. Over the thousands of years prior to the late 1800s, no one had any problems with digesting wheat. Only since the fundamental changes in how we process and prepare gluten grains in recent times are we seeing a huge increase in intolerances to these grains.

***Modern breads are largely yeast-based fermented breads, which are deficient of the most vital aspect necessary to properly digest them -- namely natural sourdough fermentation.***

The essential element in digesting grains -- especially those containing gluten -- is a viable bacterial culture in the fermentation process. This bacterium (lactic acid) starts the breakdown of the protein/gluten before it is ingested, and further continues the process as it makes its way through the human digestive system. Whenever wheat products are eaten without these naturally occurring bacteria already present and at work, our digestive system becomes overburdened, which eventually leads to digestive problems and subsequent related illnesses. The central part of the human digestive system is the bacterial flora in our intestines, which is said to be between three and five pounds alone. Natural sourdough bacteria is identical to the type of bacteria present in our colon, which is why eating bread made with it has a probiotic effect on our digestive system and wellbeing. This helps maintain intestinal health, strengthens the immune system, and neutralizes free radicals. It also allows for easy absorption of minerals and vitamins, the basic building blocks of a healthy system.

Our ancestors knew this well, probably through trial and error.

The turning point from the traditional sourdough bread occurred with the advent of microbiology in the mid- to late-1800s. Microscopes allowed insight into the unseen world of fermentation, and the isolation of the yeast cell quickly led to the manufacture of pure yeast monocultures and the invention of baker's yeast. The natural bacterial culture (lactic acid) present in traditional sourdough was thus done away with.

With the rapid leaps in technology during the industrial revolution, it wasn't long before megafactories were producing millions of pounds of yeast and bread. Steady population growth, convenience, controllability of dough fermentation, and a uniform bread ("tin bread"-- square sliced loaves instead of traditionally hand-shaped, hearth-baked bread) signified the triumph of modern man over the natural world.

Another big factor was the invention of the roller mill at the beginning of the 1900s. Within a short period of time, it replaced all wind- and water-powered natural stone mills and created the industrial flour mills. Not only did these new mills grind the flour finer, but they also allowed the nutritious part

of the wheat kernel -- the wheat germ -- to become separated from the flour, thereby increasing the longevity of the flour for up to a year. The process changed a wholesome food from a healthy complex carbohydrate to a simple carbohydrate with refined white flour.

Add to this the issue of water, a major constituent of bread. With chlorine being the main disinfectant used to sterilize drinking water, the question is: how healthy is the water from the tap for food manufacturing?

With all the factors combined -- modern additives, refined white flour, inferior water, no natural sourdough culture, and high fat and sugar content -- it is no wonder we are experiencing widespread allergic reactions to wheat products.

Having realized these connections in my studies, my resolution has strengthened to produce only the best bread possible in today's world. Two years ago the Kaslo Sourdough Bakery acquired a used natural stone mill, originally built in Tyrol with stones made from a quarry the Romans used for making their mill stones. We now include freshly stone-ground flour in all of our breads. Last year we also built a gravity-fed water system that allows us to use pristine natural mountain spring water for all of our baking. The source is located in an uninhabited wilderness area, and the analysis of the water proved it to be one of the finest quality waters this planet has to offer.

From the very beginning, all of our breads had 25% organic content. In the past few years we have moved more and more towards all organic. We have let ourselves be guided by our regional customer base in this regards. Our new export line (outside of our local area) is 100% organic. Organic commitment for us signifies respect of nature as well as living healthier.

All of our breads are hearth-baked in a stone deck oven, using simple but quality ingredients that emphasize traditional values along with principals in our modern world. I invite you to try a "Taste of the Past." Over the years, I've witnessed many an occasion where the memory buried in our tastes buds, especially in unbiased children, was reawakened by the first bite they took of our bread.

For further information visit our website at [www.microsour.com](http://www.microsour.com).



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Silvio Lettrari  
Kaslo Sourdough Bakery

P.S.: If you care for yourself, family and friends, pass this letter on. We all need to care for each other. Thank you and *Bon Appetit*.