

# The bread winners

The health factor, coupled with the cool quotient makes the loaf the right choice for zany Indians. And there are many kinds to choose from

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**Y**ES, once upon a time not so long ago, just like TV, there was hardly a choice for the variety of bread you wanted. Whether it was loaves, rolls or even the humbler *pao*, it was all white bread. Times changed and till recently white bread, or its main ingredient, *maida*, refined wheat flour, was enemy no 1 for the health conscious. However, due to a variety of factors, that perception is slowly undergoing a change. "Increasing travel has made many of the upwardly mobile aware of the continental options, where bread plays a major part," says Daniel Koshy, pastry chef at Radisson MBD Hotel, Noida.

A look around at top-end stores reveals the range of breads available — and literally in all shapes and sizes. A leading national chain store for breads, Bread & Mofe has 25 types on offer, while another, Market Café, has about 35. The prices range from as low as Rs 5 for a single to about Rs 100 for special breads at top hotels. So from salad accompaniments to side dishes, from baguettes to flavoured breads, as sandwiches or with soups, from breakfast to dinner, the bread is increasingly the option. "We serve bread with every dish — grills, pasta, main courses," says Suman Chatterjee, manager-operations at Market Café, Khan

Market. "A soup and salad with bread, or a sandwich makes much more sense, especially for lunch," is how Rajiv Reddy, a bank executive sees it. And he is choosy about the bread he has, preferring wholegrain, or rye and oats.

With health as a paramount consideration, the glycaemic index, or GI, which measures how fast a food raises blood sugar, is crucial. Bread is a rich source of carbohydrates and refined flour raises the GI. "There are a large variety of breads available — baguette, focaccia, ciabatta, whole wheat, brown, multigrain, oat, dalia, linseed, canola seed, flax seed, sunflower seed — to name a few, but one should inquire on the percentage of refined flour in the bread, for if the bread is high on refined flour, one should avoid it completely," says Bakshish Dean, executive chef, The Park Hotel. He cautions that the healthier breads are heavier and denser than regular breads as they are fermented using the sour dough culture. "Transfats, which are responsible for bad cholesterol, are minimal in breads. The temptation is to use margarine as it is stable at room temperature, but unhealthy," Koshy stresses.

With the clientele becoming more conscious, bread makers have started mixing ingredients that give more fibre to the bread structure. Multi-cereal, four-grain, whole wheat bread move faster from the shelves than white bread," says Dhruv Lamba of Bread & More. "No longer can you just put white bread on the counter and expect to get away from it," says David Ansted, executive chef, Shangri-la Hotel, Delhi. There are specific requests for certain breads, especially German, French and Italian, he adds. "It makes sense to have bread as they add both variety and go with most cuisines," says Sheetal Gupta, who hosts parties frequently.

Bread sure isn't an afterthought in bakeries. "In France you require a licence to manufacture bread with more than 70% flour, as it is considered a skilled enterprise," says Koshy. "There are a lot of classifications, and increasingly most top hotels in India are getting their flour mixes from Europe or South Africa, leading to improved quality," he says. Koshy points out that the content for gluten, which gives body to the bread in Indian flour is about 2% to 3%, while internationally, it ranges from 8% to 10%.

Of the approximately Rs 700 crore ready-to-eat bread market, the size of the high-end market for bread is minuscule. But with the loaf becoming both a health fad as well as a party must, those in the trade can only smile as they look forward to a future that gives them more than their daily bread.



## BAKE YOUR BREAD: CORN BREAD

A simple recipe for you to try out with your oven at home  
Three loaves of about 450 gms each



### INGREDIENTS:

Corn flour 800 gms  
Wheat flour 200 gms  
Salt 20 gms  
Yeast 25 gms  
Sugar 15 gms  
Water as required, about 500 litres ideal  
Bread improver 5 gms  
Gluten 5 gms

**METHOD:** Mix water, sugar, salt and yeast in a bowl. Add remaining ingredients and mix for 15-20 minutes. Cover dough with a light wet cloth or polythene sheet (to keep it airtight). Keep for 30 minutes. The dough should rise by 75%. Put dough in baking tins and bake at about 280°C.