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Growing wheat at Horsley school

# Bake YOUR LAWN

Andrea Mynard and her kids get messy sowing, growing, milling and baking bread

**A** freshly baked, hand-made loaf of bread, still warm from the oven and with a golden crust, can be comfort food at its best. Made with good flour and given plenty of time to rise and develop a good flavour, it's a wholesome and tasty food to share with your family. Crying out to have chunks ripped out of it while still warm, to have heaps of healthy food piled on to it, to

be toasted or made into soldiers. What a shame, then, that the bread that many of our children eat is far removed from this feel-good image. Pappy, bland and laced with additives, industrially produced bread is often pumped up with water and far from nourishing. But thanks to a 'Bake Your Lawn' campaign, children

across Britain are being introduced to real bread by getting involved in the whole process from seed to sandwich.

Where does real bread come from? Schools have been given free organic wheat seeds and encouraged to sow them, tend the crop, mill the wheat and, eventually, to bake loaves. Organised by The Real Bread Campaign, this project aims to give real meaning to the saying, "dig in!" and show children exactly where real bread comes from. I went along to Horsley primary school in Gloucestershire to see Tom Herbert, co-star of the recent Channel 4 series, *The Fabulous Baker Brothers*, launch the campaign. The artisan baker was helping pupils sow a small plot of organic wheat in the school's grounds, keen to show them how easy it is to produce lush loaves. As children began scattering seeds across their raised beds, Tom asked, "Do you like the smell of baking bread?" While I began fantasising about the cosy warmth of a family kitchen filled with the aroma of baking, the children planted ever more enthusiastically.



Some using the scatter approach, others digging to Australia with their trowels.

A fifth generation baker and now father of four, Tom is full of a contagious enthusiasm for baking and seems to be ideally placed to inspire children about the joys of real bread. Tom lived above a bakery with his dad until he was eight and often helped with the baking. In his recently published book 'The Fabulous Baker Brothers' he remembers a "hot environment with banging tins and Bruce Springsteen and Roxy music blaring out." As a lad, Tom knew that he wanted to be a baker. He also became aware of the importance of good raw ingredients, with wheat fields surrounding his Grandpa Herbert's farm on the Cotswold escarpment. Grandpa Herbert had little regard for the Chorleywood baking processes which had become popular with his contemporaries. Instead, he ploughed his own furrow, kept making bread the traditional way and began sourcing organic wheat; first from a farm on the Isle of Wight (and milling it himself in the bakery) then by buying a farm where he grew and milled 600 acres of his own flour. Tom's mum and dad still live on the farm today and Tom's own children are now aspiring bakers. His oldest two kids, aged 10 and eight, have their own jars of sourdough in the fridge at home and get Grandpa to compare their loaves. A tricky task needing some diplomacy!

### Lessons in loaf

Keen to breathe a bit of joy into breadmaking and help schoolchildren understand and get excited about where wholesome food comes from, Tom regularly runs 'Lessons in Loaf' classes at Horsley school, which three of his own children attend. "Baking is such an enjoyable part of my life," he says, "I'm keen to share it with others." He is also keen to point out how bread can be tied in with so many curriculum subjects, including local geography, art, and science projects, and runs workshops to encourage teachers through the Square Food Foundation.

The 'Bake Your Lawn' campaign aims to make these ideas accessible to children throughout Britain with free organic wheat seeds and 'Grow it, Mill



### TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT REAL BREAD:

- 1 To find a local source of real bread, see [sustainweb.org/realbread/bakery\\_finder](http://sustainweb.org/realbread/bakery_finder)
- 2 Download a free grassroots guide to baking your lawn or learn how to get organic wheat seeds at [sustainweb.org/realbread/bake\\_your\\_lawn/](http://sustainweb.org/realbread/bake_your_lawn/)
- 3 For courses on baking your own real bread and to campaign to bring better bread to our homes and neighbourhoods, see [breadmatters.com](http://breadmatters.com)
- 4 To buy very tasty flour for breadmaking from heritage varieties of wheat grown organically in the UK (and it also happens to be low in gluten, aiding digestibility) see [oxfordbreadgroup.co.uk](http://oxfordbreadgroup.co.uk)
- 5 To buy real bread from their shops in the Cotswolds or online (including a weekly breadbox scheme) see [hobbshousebakery.co.uk](http://hobbshousebakery.co.uk)
- 6 For ideas on how to bring bread into the curriculum see [sustainweb.org/realbread/schools/](http://sustainweb.org/realbread/schools/)
- 7 For some great recipes for real bread, plus sweet treats, tasty suppers and wholesome family meal ideas see 'The Fabulous Baker Brothers' book by Tom and Henry Herbert. [tinyurl.com/tomherbert](http://tinyurl.com/tomherbert)

it, Bake it, Eat it' guides available to teachers and youth leaders. Children are encouraged to keep wheat diaries from sowing through to harvest, milling and baking. As part of science projects children might measure the wheat sown, keep track of how it grows in their diaries and later weigh the wheat plants and see how much is harvested. Others might paint the sheaves of wheat as part of art projects. And some schools will have scarecrow making competitions so that the seeds aren't all eaten by birds.

As Tom says, "It's a wonderful way to engage with the soil, everyone in the school can see the crop growing." Everyone can get involved in the harvesting, milling and baking too. Some schools get their crop milled at local watermills, learning about local history, while others will be hands on, using coffee mills or a pestle and mortar to grind their own wheat. By the time they bake their own golden loaves of bread, it all seems fabulously reminiscent of the 'Little Red Hen' children's story. >



Tom and his brother bake up a storm

*"The starter produced a delicious loaf with a great texture that was actually really easy to make"*

#### **making your own**

Having watched the children scatter seeds at Horsley and been reminded by Tom that it only takes one square metre of ground to grow enough wheat for a loaf of bread, I came away thinking it was a great project to do at home with children too. And inspired by the fun (and feasts!) that could be had from some flour and water, I couldn't wait to get a sourdough starter going. I had, in the past, tried to get a sourdough culture going and ended up with a mouldy mess in the airing cupboard, but my newfound optimism, coupled with a desire to have that aroma of freshly baked bread on a weekend morning, inspired me to have another go. Whether it was the idiot-proof instructions in 'The Fabulous Baker Brothers', the natural wild yeast in the heritage wholemeal flour I used this time, or my daughter Ruby's enthusiastic stirring when we did our daily feeding with flour and water, it eventually worked. The first attempt at baking with it (an optimistic two weeks

in) resulted in a loaf that was tasty but had a texture more suitable for building work than chewing. But after a more patient four weeks, the starter produced a delicious loaf with a great texture that was actually really easy to make. And toast the next day was heavenly.

With a little bit of forward planning but not too much effort, it's easy to use the starter to bake bread whenever there's the urge for that nostalgic warmth in the kitchen. And because you make it yourself, nothing goes to waste. Any leftovers will be great for toast, bruschetta, for Panzanella (Italian bread and tomato salad) or for breadcrumbs. 'The Fabulous Baker Brothers' book has plenty of delicious recipes in it for using up breadcrumbs, from topping cassoulet to comforting bread sauce or rhubarb Queen of Puddings. It also has some good ideas for tempting children into the kitchen. Fishfinger sarnies are great made with the Sherston Loaf, a classic white loaf which is made with overnight dough and is a heritage recipe

from Tom's great-grandfather. My four year old daughter happily tucks in to her sustainable (and cheap!) pollack cooked in breadcrumbs and you don't have to worry about the additive laden orange breadcrumbs you find in the shops. Young children can get enjoyably messy making them too as there is lots of dipping in egg and milk.

#### **enjoy getting messy!**

Relaxing with mess is possibly key to enjoying growing your own loaf with children, from the mucking around in mud planting, to the squishing of flour and water in the kitchen. Tom recommends: "Clear away anything you don't want to get messy first and then you don't have to be scared about making a mess - you can enjoy getting kids involved in being sticky." With this taken care of and a bit of flour and water, you can start on easy breadsticks and soda bread, move on to pizzas and sourdough, and even try ash-baked flatbread. There may be some chaos and burnt offerings along the way but hopefully there'll be fun and feasting in both the garden and kitchen. >



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### FISH FINGER SARNIES WITH TARTARE SAUCE

**FEEDS:** 4 Home-made fish fingers are super-easy to make and freeze well, so make a large batch and keep them for a rainy day. Push the boat out and make your own mayonnaise as well.

**INGREDIENTS:** 8 slices of white bread; 200g fillet of white fish such as cod, pollock or whiting, skinned; Salt and pepper; 2 eggs; 50g milk; 30g flour; 100g breadcrumbs; 1 baby gem lettuce

**FOR THE TARTARE SAUCE:** 1 tsp finely chopped parsley; 1 tsp finely chopped tarragon; 1 tbsp finely chopped capers; 8 cocktail gherkins (cornichons), finely chopped; 1 small shallot, finely diced; 50g mayonnaise; Salt and pepper

1 Slice the fish into thin strips, about 1 cm wide. Season with salt and pepper.

2 Whisk the eggs and milk together. Dust the fish in the flour and shake the excess off. Dip in the egg and milk, then roll in the breadcrumbs. Dip back into the egg and again through the breadcrumbs. Dip

back into the egg and again through the breadcrumbs. Place in the fridge to firm up.

3 To make the tartare sauce, stir all the chopped ingredients into the mayonnaise. Season to taste. It should be quite coarse, thick and pungent.

4 Heat a fat-fryer to 170°C (or warm the vegetable oil in a pan using a probe to gauge the temperature accurately) and cook the fish fingers for 5 minutes, until brown and crispy. The fish will cook quite quickly, and it's better to be just done than dry and mushy. Remove and season. Spread the bread liberally with tartare sauce. Add a layer of fish fingers and a few leaves of baby gem. Give the whole thing a quick squash and eat whilst looking at a rainy window and thinking the world isn't so bad when you've got a fish finger sarnie.

To view a film of Tom Herbert making the fish finger sarnies with his brother, Henry (co-author of 'The Fabulous Baker Brothers') see [steppingstonemedia.co.uk/fish-finger-sarnies-with-the-fabulous-baker-brothers/](http://steppingstonemedia.co.uk/fish-finger-sarnies-with-the-fabulous-baker-brothers/)

### OVERNIGHT DOUGH: THE SHERSTON LOAF

**MAKES:** 1 LARGE LOAF

This is a loaf to make the BEST TOAST IN THE WORLD!

It has a lush flavour, which comes from the long, slow, overnight fermentation and is a heritage recipe, from Thomas Herbert, Tom Herbert's great-grandfather. The tiny amount of yeast also makes this bread easier to digest for a lot of people and it keeps fresh for longer than most other loaves.

**INGREDIENTS:** 560g strong white flour; 10g sea salt; 10g sugar; 2g dried yeast or 4g fresh; 20g fat (butter/lard/white shortening or a combination); 100ml milk (full-fat is best); 200ml cool water

1 Mix all the ingredients together for 10 minutes in a mixer or 15 minutes by hand until you have a smooth stiff dough. Cover and

leave in a cool place to rest for 2 hours. Mould to fit a large tin and then, having placed it in the tin, cover and leave overnight to rise in the fridge. In the morning (or after about 8 hours), the loaf will have risen slightly. Take it out of the fridge and put it somewhere warm to carry on rising: it could take from 1 to 3 hours. Heat the oven up to 240°C (if it doesn't go that high, then as hot as it'll go). Lightly dust the risen dough with flour and give it five slashes with a sharp knife. Steam the oven and bake the loaf in the tin directly on a shelf or baking stone if you have one. Remember to turn down the temperature after 10 minutes.

2 Once the loaf is baked a beautiful golden colour and rings hollow when tapped on the bottom (about 35 minutes), then take it out of the oven and cool on a wire rack.

*"Relaxing with mess is key to enjoying growing your own loaf with children"*



Getting messy with long fermentation dough