

History of Baking

History of Baking – Study Notes

1. Origins of Baking

Period	Region	Key Developments
Prehistoric (10,000 BC)	Near East & North Africa	• Early humans cooked flat grains on hot stones. • First “baked” foods were simple flatbreads.
Neolithic (7,000 BC)	Fertile Crescent	• Domestication of wheat, barley, and rye. • Invention of grinding stones for finer flour. • Use of clay ovens (tannurs) for more controlled heat.
Bronze Age (3,000 BC)	Egypt, Mesopotamia	• First written recipes (e.g., Egyptian “bread-making” papyri). • Introduction of yeast fermentation from wild microbes. • Development of sourdough starters.

2. Classical Antiquity

Civilization	Contributions
Ancient Egypt	• Large communal bakeries attached to temples. • Bread as a staple, offering, and currency. • Use of baker's ovens with multiple chambers.
Greece	• Introduction of olive?oil?rich breads and sweet pastries (e.g., <i>plakous</i>). • Early use of honey as a sweetener.
Rome	• Spread of Egyptian techniques across the empire. • Development of panis quadratus (square loaf) and panis siligineus (fine white bread). • First recorded baker's guilds (collegia).

3. Middle Ages (5th?–?15th?c.)

Aspect	Details
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Technological	• Construction of stone?floor ovens in monasteries and town halls. • Introduction of iron molds for shaping loaves.
Social	• Bakers organized into guilds (e.g., the French <i>Boulangers</i> guild). • Bread quality regulated by law (e.g., “bread?weight statutes”).
Culinary	• Emergence of rye and barley breads in northern Europe. • Sweet pastries enriched with spices, dried fruits, and almonds (influence of Crusades).
Key Texts	• <i>Liber de Coquina</i> (c.?1300) – one of the earliest European cookbooks with baking recipes.

4. Renaissance & Early Modern Era (15th?–?18th?c.)

Development	Impact
Refined Milling	• Introduction of water?powered millstones ? finer, more consistent flour.
Leavening Advances	• Better understanding of sourdough and early chemical leaveners (e.g., beaten egg whites).
Pastry Evolution	• French <i>pâtisserie</i> flourished: croissants, mille?feuille, éclair. • Italian <i>pasticceria</i>: cannoli, panettone (16th?c.).
Printing of Recipes	• Cookbooks such as “De Honesta Voluptate” (1514) disseminated baking knowledge across Europe.
Colonial Exchange	• Introduction of **