

History of Baking

History of Baking – Quick Reference Notes

1. Origins (Pre-5000 BC)

Period / Region	Key Developments	Evidence
Neolithic (~10,000 BC)	First use of wild grains; simple flatbread cooked on hot stones or in ashes.	Archaeological charred grain residues, hearths.
Ancient Egypt (~3000–2000 BC)	First true leavened bread; use of <i>sourdough</i> starter; ovens (clay “tannur”).	Tomb paintings, papyri describing “yeast” (?) and baking tools.
Mesopotamia (~2000 BC)	Early recipes for barley and wheat breads; introduction of “baking stones” and metal molds.	Cuneiform tablets (e.g., the “Baker’s Manual”).
Indus Valley (~2500 BC)	Flatbreads on heated bricks; evidence of wheat and millet mixtures.	Charred bread fragments, baking pits.

2. Classical Antiquity (500 BC – 500 AD)

Culture	Innovations	Typical Products
Greek	Use of honey, nuts, and cheese in breads; early “panettone-like” sweet breads.	<i>Artos</i> (plain loaf), <i>plakous</i> (cake-like).
Roman	Introduction of metal ovens (fornos) and moulded loaves ; refined milling (stone-ground flour).	<i>Panis</i> (various loaves), <i>libum</i> (offering cake), <i>placenta</i> (layered cheese cake).
Jewish	Development of sourdough and unleavened breads for religious rites (e.g., <i>matzah</i>).	Matzah, <i>challah</i> (later).

Impact: Standardization of recipes in cookbooks (e.g., *Apicius*), spread of baking guilds across the Roman Empire.

3. Medieval Period (500–1500)

Region	Milestones
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	• Guild system – bakers organized into powerful medieval guilds; apprenticeships formalized.
Europe	• Stone ovens in monasteries and towns; communal ovens for peasants. • Introduction of spices (cinnamon, cloves) from the Crusades, enriching flavor. • Development of sugar refining; early sweet pastries (e.g., <i>baklava</i>).
Islamic World	• Use of almond paste, rose water, and citrus in cakes. • Documentation in <i>Kitab al-?ab?kh</i> (13th?c.) – early cookbook with detailed baking methods.
China	• First steam?baked buns (mantou) and layered pastries (jianbing). • Use of yeast derived from rice wine fermentation.

4. Renaissance & Early Modern Era (1500–1800)

Development	Details
Refined Milling	Water?powered mills produce finer flour ? lighter textures.
Chemical Leavening	Early experiments with baking powder (1800s) using alum and cream of tartar.
Cookbooks	<i>The Art of Cookery</i> (1660, England) and <i>Le Cuisinier Fran?ois</i> (1651, France) include precise baking formulas.

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