



ELENA HEATHERWICK, EAT PICTURES

**PROVE IT**  
Preparing the dough at Bread Ahead, Borough Market, southeast London. Top right: some of the selection on offer at Leakers in Bridport, Dorset

From spelt sourdough to soda bread and cinnamon buns, *Laura Goodman* finds the 25 best bakeries in the UK

# Knead to know

**W**e eat a lot of rubbish bread in this country, having fallen into hard-to-break habits with our undeniably convenient supermarket sliced loaves. They get the job done. But they do so with the help of processing aids, preservatives and treatment agents — murky terms for stuff that ideally shouldn't be there — and wouldn't be if, like the French, we bought a fresh baguette to go with every meal. Real bread is made of four ingredients: flour, water, salt, yeast.

But something is changing. We're gradually hunting down artisan loaves instead. Some of the bakeries in this list have been quietly getting on with it for decades, paying no heed to the anti-carb hullabaloo, but a good number of them have opened more recently — some by former chefs looking to get out of the restaurant kitchen and some by regular bread fans armed with their own lovingly conceived sourdough starters. They just don't want us to eat rubbish any more.

The French way is the dream, but even if we're not there yet, what's a nicer Sunday treat than a big old boule, kneaded by hand, attentively baked and dusted with? Go and get yourself one — it will go very nicely with the paper.



## LONDON AND SOUTHEAST BREAD AHEAD

**Borough Market, London SE1**  
Trays of Justin Gellatly's doughnuts, all piped with different custards, fill the capital's social-media feeds every weekend. But who wouldn't want to document a fried ball of dough loaded with caramel, lemon curd or chocolate malt? Bread Ahead is also renowned for its brilliant baguettes and sourdoughs. Get them at the Borough Market stall or its new shop in Covent Garden.

[breadahead.com](http://breadahead.com)

## THE LITTLE BREAD PEDLAR

**Bermondsey, London SE16**  
These guys are open to the public from 8.30am on Saturdays (with coffee), but spend the rest of the week supplying local cafes by bike. They call themselves a sourdough bakery, but that description belies the numerous other dreamy items they produce: chocolate brioche loaves, anchovy and wild caper buns, damson cream buns, eclairs and Aberdeen butteries (fat, round, flaky, butter-loaded rolls) — to name a few.

[lbpedlar.com](http://lbpedlar.com)

## YEAST

**Broadway Market, London E8**  
Yeast isn't open much (only on Saturdays, actually), but when it is, it brings the butteriest and best pastries to east London's Broadway Market. The bakers behind this

"speciality viennoiserie bakery" were inspired by 2014's GBBO to start making their own mini kouign-amanns — those layered, heavily buttered, gently caramelised Breton cakes. They also do a croissant loaf — watch out for the almond-cinnamon flavour — and call it the Croaf, obviously.

[yeastbakery.com](http://yeastbakery.com)

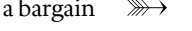
## VILLAGE BAKERY

**Harefield, Uxbridge**  
As old school as it gets, this bakery in tiny Harefield has endured with little interference from the outside world. Everything is baked on the premises, everyone who works there knows their stuff and the shelves are often left bare after a morning stampede. It's cheap, too (£1.80 for a large granary), although, very occasionally, a sign will appear in the window, notifying regulars that the flour mill has put its prices up.

01895 823994

## STONEHAM BAKEHOUSE

**Hove, East Sussex**  
Simon Cobb (a fortuitous name) started this community-supported bakery to help him deal with his own mental health after he was signed off from work with stress. Now, customers can order goods for collection: rye loaves, pains de campagne and cinnamon buns. But Stoneham is all about people getting stuck in, and the workshops are excellent for that. Everyday Bread offers four whole hours of doughy wisdom for a bargain



£50. And once you've finished that, you can tackle bagels for another £25.

[stonehambakehouse.org.uk](http://stonehambakehouse.org.uk)

## WEST AND SOUTHWEST

### HOBBS HOUSE BAKERY Various locations, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire

Tom and Henry Herbert — you might know them as the Fabulous Baker Brothers — have four shops in Cotswold towns, each as pretty as the next. The Herberts have been in Chipping Sodbury for more than 35 years, and their sourdough is now 61. There are wholemeal and rye sourdoughs, plus brioche loaves, burger buns and their beloved sherston, a gorgeous white number that gets an overnight ferment.

[hobbshousebakery.co.uk](http://hobbshousebakery.co.uk)

### EAST BRISTOL BAKERY Bristol

The sign on the black and white front spells out East Bristol Bakery in the kind of stripped-back font that shouts: "Our bread doesn't contain anything it shouldn't." Alex Poulter quit his bar job in 2012 to turn his attention to producing bread containing flour, water, salt and yeast — nothing more. He uses organic flours from local mills, including spelt and rye, the latter being put to excellent use in his salted rye cookies.

[eastbristolbakery.co.uk](http://eastbristolbakery.co.uk)

### PINKMANS Bristol

This is a bakery in the most 2016 sense of the word. Not only does it produce several sourdoughs, baguettes and boules, it also makes pizzas and serves them with beers and spritzers until 10pm. Bread comes out of the oven at 8am; then there's a full breakfast menu, plus the Pinkmans signature sour-dough-nuts, which are filled with malted milk or honeycomb custards. You can even watch the bakers at work while you eat.

[pinkmans.co.uk](http://pinkmans.co.uk)

### LEAKERS BAKERY Bridport, Dorset

Look for the humbug-striped awning on Bridport's high street, among the greengrocers and



“Real bread is made of four ingredients — flour, water, salt and yeast”

butchers. It's been a bakery since the 1830s and became Leakers in 1914, when the wedding-cake specialist GS Leaker was in charge. The name has endured, as have the bread-making techniques and many of the original fittings — the organic flour is kept in the old coal store. The scones, cheese straws and apple cakes all have loyal fans.

[leakersbakery.co.uk](http://leakersbakery.co.uk)

### TOWN MILL BAKERY Lyme Regis, Dorset

This town is surely one of the best places in the UK to cosy down with a cuppa. Handily, it has Town Mill, run by Clive Cobb, where the granary sourdoughs make exactly the kind of hearty toast your steaming mug of tea is crying out for. For breakfast, sit at a communal table and help yourself to custardy pains aux raisins, toast, boiled eggs, peanut butter and jam, or order BLTs all round.

[ourbakeries.com](http://ourbakeries.com)

### EXPLODING BAKERY Exeter, Devon

Tom Oxford and Oliver Coysh were brought together by food while still at school. Their wholesale bakery is a celebration of their two loves: Devon and food. It yields tray upon tray of salted-caramel brownies, raspberry and white chocolate bakewells, and passion fruit cheesecake. You can see straight into the busy kitchen from the small, open-plan cafe, which serves mugs of hot chocolate and loaves of fresh soda bread.

[explodingbakery.com](http://explodingbakery.com)

### MIDLANDS AND NORTH MA BAKER'S Worcester

This one offers heart-warming vibes as well as good bread. Originally called Hot Bake, it has been in the same family for 50 years. Five years ago, Sam Barriscale took over. He wanted to switch things up while honouring his mum's hard work, so he called it Ma Baker's. The result is a cross-generational triumph, offering a

pleasing mix of ol' bloomers, lardy cakes and iced buns, along with custard doughnuts, fermented loaves and charcoal brioche buns.

[mabaker.net](http://mabaker.net)

### LOAF Birmingham

Loaf started when Tom Baker (another fortuitous name) began baking for neighbours in the wood-fired oven in his garden. From there, he went on to teach from his home kitchen. Now,



### BAKED GOOD From far left: the Hazelmere, Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria; pastries at Bakery47, Glasgow; the Little Bread Pedlar, Bermondsey, southeast London

Loaf is a cookery school and a community bakery specialising in rye and wheat sourdoughs. The bakery runs a few lunch specials, including dhals, frittatas and focaccia sandwiches. On Fridays and Saturdays, you have to swoop in early for salt-beef rolls.

[loafonline.co.uk](http://loafonline.co.uk)

### TROVE CAFE + BAKERY Manchester

Started in 2011 by a husband-and-wife team, Trove recently reopened its cafe and shop following a refurbishment and extension, which gives you an idea of how popular it is. Behold a mind-blowing selection of brown rice sourdoughs, date and walnut loaves and the cutest mini baguettes.

[www.trovefoods.co.uk](http://www.trovefoods.co.uk)

### POLLEN BAKERY Manchester

Opened this year, Pollen sells loaves that are "well-done", which means its five sourdoughs are darker on top than you would usually expect. In France, people have been ordering their bread *bien cuit* for years; now, Pollen's owners, Hannah and Chris, are hoping their mahogany crusts will win Manchester hearts. Look out for wheels of their salted butter, too.

[pollenbakery.com](http://pollenbakery.com)

### MERLIN'S BAKERY CAFE Burscough, Lancashire

This is probably the nicest surprise you could hope for in the Merlin Park business estate. Behind an underwhelming facade, there are baskets full of freshly baked loaves, including sourdough, date and walnut and the all-new beer bread. And the lunch menu is a seasonal dream: at this time of year, you'll find cauliflower cheese soup and Lancashire hotpot. There are toasted teacakes with jam for pud.

01704 898102

### THE HANDMADE BAKERY Slaiithwaite, West Yorkshire

One of the Handmade's sourdough starters is from 1970s Russia — the owners call it the grandmother. It's used in a bread called sisu, named for the Finnish word that has no direct translation, but basically means guts and determination — exactly what you want in a 100% rye loaf. Also try the sleepless white, so called because it ferments overnight. In the cafe, there are soups, stews, sandwiches and slices of Tunisian orange cake.

[thehandmadebakery.coop](http://thehandmadebakery.coop)

### NOISETTE BAKEHOUSE Leeds

This is only a pop-up now, but if you keep visiting Sarah Lemanski's roving truck, the Madeleine Express, to eat her brown butter, apricot and tonka muffins and cinnamon sugar madeleines, you never know. Her brownies are

renowned — she describes the salted-caramel version as "ravines of salted caramel nestled in a brown butterscotch batter with dark chocolate chips, finished with flakes of smoked sea salt". So there.

[noisettebakery.com](http://noisettebakery.com)

### HAXBY BAKEHOUSE Haxby, near York

It started with a charcuterie. Phil and Tina Clayton have run their space as a deli since 2008, but now it has a bakehouse in which the team produce beetroot and nigella or sunflower and honey sourdoughs. Handily, while you're there, you can pick up some pâté and yorkshire blue to slather on top. Check the website for the list of outlets lucky enough to sell Haxby's dazzling loaves.

[haxbybakery.co.uk](http://haxbybakery.co.uk)

### THE HAZELMERE BAKERY Grange-over-Sands, Cumbria

A five-minute stroll from an Edwardian promenade in this seaside town, the Hazelmere couldn't be a sweeter place to make crumbs. There's a cafe offering more than 50 types of loose-leaf tea. And out of what must be quite a frenetic bakery come cornbreads, olive focaccias, chia seed cobs and Cumberland rum nickies (pies with a treacly, gingery, rum-laced filling).

[thehazelmere.co.uk](http://thehazelmere.co.uk)

### BROUGHTON VILLAGE BAKERY

*Broughton in Furness, Cumbria*

With a history that spans almost 90 years and several owners, Broughton Village Bakery was started by the Shaw family, who made tea and pies for local farmers. The hot pies are still there, but it's more popular with weary ramblers these days, who come for the log fires and sofas, and like to round things off with a bit of cake. The deep-filled egg custards, vanilla slices and lemon drizzles all get rave reviews.

[broughtonvillagebakery.com](http://broughtonvillagebakery.com)

### WALES, SCOTLAND, NORTHERN IRELAND THE ONE MILE BAKERY Cardiff

Bread lovers within a mile of Cardiff are laughing — they can get gorgeous, flour-dusted loaves

delivered to their door by bike. The source is the baker-writer Elisabeth Mahoney's townhouse kitchen, where she focuses on classic and sourdough loaves. Sign up for a one- or three-month subscription of baked joy, or try one of her brilliant bread-making classes (£125, including lunch and wine).

[onemilebakery.com](http://onemilebakery.com)

### BAKERY47 Glasgow

A diamond in the rough, Bakery47 sits alongside a Kwik Fit, a Halfords and a wasteland. It started as a home bakery and its owners are intent on keeping things low-key. It's only open four days a week, but the baguettes are some of the best out there — pointy, dark, chewy, with one hell of a crust — and are best eaten on site, with garlicky butter beans and boiled eggs.

[bakery47.com](http://bakery47.com)

### BOSTOCK BAKERY North Berwick

Pastry chef Ross Baxter and his wife Lindsay both care deeply about baking bread that "gives you a big hug". Along with some incredibly alluring crusts, there are sleek, glossy eclairs, entremets and tarts. Bostock wouldn't be out of place in Brooklyn, but here it is less than an hour from Edinburgh instead. Lucky North Berwick.

01620 895515

### ANN'S PANTRY Larne, Co Antrim

Helen and John took over from their parents 10 years ago at this traditional bakery that's all about passing on techniques. The set-up is classic bakery counter, but the baked goods are anything but standard. John's job is to tweak fiercely Northern Irish recipes such as Guinness breads, soda breads and treacle bannocks (flat and round). The spelt and black pudding potato bread is a fine example of the deliciousness they stand for.

028 2826 0474

For five more picks of bakeries, go to [thesundaytimes.co.uk/food](http://thesundaytimes.co.uk/food), or *The Dish* on tablet