

*Text Simone Collet,*

## **Wheat and bread**

**Wheat has been feeding mankind since the beginning of times. Let's take a look at their common history.**

Since the beginning of agriculture, wheat and cereals have been an essential food for people. On all continents, civilisations developed on the basis of one main cereal: Rice in Asia, Sorgho or millet in Africa, corn in South America, wheat in Europe.

### **Let's talk about wheat...**

In the Middle East the first growers selected and developed wild grasses from a humble plant called "jointed goat".

Time passing, they managed with many efforts and patience to create the final grain, in other words the small spelt, then the emmer, and



finally the big spelt. Wheat followed in countless prime varieties, adapted to the climate and the soil of the different producing regions.

After the end of the ice age wheat could be grown in Europe on lands liberated from their ice cover. For centuries, it was mostly grounded and eaten in the form of porridge, the basic food of the agricultural population.

In Switzerland during the Second World War a dozen standardised varieties that were particularly satisfying, thanks to their high gluten content, replaced the hundreds of local wheat varieties having resulted from crosses between the original cereals.

Intended primarily to satisfy the needs of the population during times of scarcity, these more profitable varieties are still widely cultivated today.

“Do not eat your wheat while it is too young”, otherwise no yield will grow advises an old farmer wisdom. This warning full of common sense has kept its relevance...

### **The return of old varieties**

However, the old varieties have not disappeared. On the contrary, one rediscovers them on the front of the stage surfing on the wave of the return to a necessary biodiversity,

Can be mentioned the black starch (already grown 7000 years ago) and the gruyere red wheat, whose yield gives a straw of the most colourful effect to weave pretty coloured hats. Also should be mentioned among the local varieties the local wheat named “baffles” and “vaulion” ...

Among the family of bread grains, let us not forget the Valais rye giving this dark bread which is so tasty and whose reputation is well established; a real feast with an alpine cheese and a nice glass of cold fondant wine.

### **Naked or coated**

Among the wheats, we distinguish the blond ears with naked corn of the durum wheat, the tender wheat and the wheat. The ears of the old varieties have their grains crimped in their husks to be peeled before use. Not very practical or rational certainly, but the reward for a relatively modest effort lies in the greater wealth of these grains in magnesium, zinc, iron, lysine, copper, proteins... All these elements give a special flavour and contribute to our health.

## Let's talk bread...

If in our time good fresh and crispy bread does no longer necessarily accompany all our dishes, it is far from disappearing from our tables. It is the companion per excellence of cheese. And one can find an infinitive range of breads in the form of slices of bread and sandwiches, that richly and healthy garnished, are often a real meal.



## Buckwheat is the exception

Like wheat, buckwheat is commonly used for making pancakes. This plant does, however, not range within the wheat family. **Because, contrary to its appearance, buckwheat is not a real cereal.** It is a plant of the Polygoacées family, just like its delicious sister rhubarb.

What does this matter to gourmets! What counts in their eyes as in their pallet is the lightness of these so fine pancakes, whose **glutenfree** flavour is perfectly digestible.

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