



## Grains of truth

Llynnon Mill, Ynys Mon, is the last working windmill in Wales. As the 'mother of Wales', the island once provided the entire nation with wheat.

White bread was once the chosen bread of the rich while poor people ate dark bread. The trend reversed in the late 20th century with dark bread preferred as having superior nutritional value. White bread became associated with lower-class ignorance of nutrition.

The expression "baker's dozen" dates to the 13th century. A law was introduced to prevent bakers shortchanging customers. If caught, they were severely punished. To protect against having a hand chopped off, a baker would give 13 for the price of 12.

Edward De Bono suggests the Arab-Israeli conflict is partly due to low levels of zinc in a population which eats unleavened bread. A known side effect of zinc deficiency is aggression. He suggested shipping jars of Marmite to the Middle East.

Warburtons, family bakers since 1876

and one of the three largest bread producers in the UK claim to bake bread the traditional way. According to its website: "This is a family company selling traditionally baked bread with a freshness and quality you really can taste." But when we ask how they produce such high daily volumes using "traditional" methods despite using 'no time dough' a spokeswoman says: "We use the Chorleywood Bread Process, we wouldn't be able to make the amount we do otherwise. It's an entirely different method of making bread. It really depends on what you mean by 'traditional' - we do use pretty traditional recipes though. Not all additives are bad for you."

In response to a growing backlash against chewy, chemically laden bread, Alun Williams has opened his own artisan bakery, Becws Alun, in Penmaenmawr, north Wales.

A Baker for 24 years, he believes the original method of making bread has been all but lost in the UK. He says: "Bread making is a slow process, something that is created after many hours, if it's done properly. Commercial bread is knocked out in 90 minutes flat, and loaves are produced by their thousands every hour. Bread shouldn't be like that. Factory bakers just add water to a dry concoction of flour and additives."

As Williams's truly traditional bread is becoming more popular, customers are travelling from across north Wales to buy it. His hand baked, additive free bread, costing only a few pence more than a supermarket loaf, is selling like the proverbial hot cakes.

"The giant commercial bakers can't produce proper bread," he says. "The skill has been lost. Customers come to me fed up with the quality and taste of supermarket bread. They want the taste of what they used to buy years ago. Animal hair is used in commercial bread and enzymes are derived from the hair to give bread volume. A miller told me that I wouldn't be able to produce decent bread without additives but I have proved him wrong." ■

