

DO ALL FLOURS MAKE GOOD BREAD AND BISCUITS?

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WHEAT, from which flour is made is classified broadly into two types namely: Soft wheat and Hard wheat (also described as strong wheat). Soft wheat is grown in England, France, and Scotland and Hard wheat is grown in Canada, Sweden and Russia. Since wheat is not grown in Ghana, the type of wheat flour available in the country therefore depends on where it is imported.

Soft wheat flour has a great amount of starch but is low in protein, whilst the strong wheat flour is higher in protein.

Gluten which gives body to bread is formed from the protein in the flour. The higher the protein content of the flour, the better the quality of gluten and the more water the flour will absorb to produce a large yield of dough. It must be emphasised here that the gluten strength of a flour is one of its most important properties. The capacity of the flour to produce a large volumed, well risen loaf depends to a large extent on this property.

Strong wheat flour is therefore good for bread making whilst soft wheat flour is good for short pastry, short bread doughs, biscuits and cakes.

As well as knowing the type of flour to use, a sound knowledge of the quality and quantity of other ingredients and of the processing technique is essential if the baker is to produce a desirable final product.

Local Flour Mills

The two flour mills in Ghana produce only strong flours at the moment. However, the

housewife who wants to prepare short goods can prepare some soft flour for this purpose by adding cornflour or rice flour to the locally produced wheat flour. About one-eighth of the wheat flour weight can be made up of either cornflour or rice flour. The addition of these starchy products dilutes the gluten strength of the flour and therefore softens it. There are other types of flours which are worth knowing.

Wholemeal and Wheatmeal

Wholemeal is generally made by grinding the whole of the wheat into flour. This means the wholemeal is 100 per cent wheat. Genuine wholemeal is not frequently made. What is generally sold as brown flour is not wholemeal but wheatmeal. Wheatmeals vary considerably and contain 85 per cent to 98 per cent of the wheat grain. Some millers produce wheatmeals containing almost all the grain with the germ excluded. Others blend white flour and finely ground bran (i.e. the skin of the wheat grain) to produce wheatmeal or brown flour.

Wholemeals and wheatmeals have the disadvantage of having a short shelf-life. They readily go rancid when temperatures are high due to their high oil content. They should therefore be stored under cool conditions.

Wholemeal or wheatmeal bread is rich in vitamins and minerals because it contains the germ which is rich in these nutrients. One would conclude therefore that brown bread is more nutritious than whitebread. However, experiments have shown that brown bread is not absorbed in the digestive system to the same extent as white bread. Furthermore, Food

Laws stipulate that white flour should be enriched with vitamins and minerals to specified levels. Therefore, even though brown flour contains natural nutrients, it cannot be said that it is nutritionally superior to *enriched* white flour.

Self-raising Flour

Self-raising flour is simply a mixture of soft flour and other ingredients such as cream of tartar and bicarbonate of soda. A good self-raising flour does not contain too much baking powder since such flour is used for all sorts of products. In the United Kingdom the minimum aerating power for such flour is laid down by law.

The ingredients are mechanically sifted and

blended to ensure thorough distribution of the baking powder in the flour. This type of flour is convenient to use for products that have to be slightly aerated because one does not have to add baking powder.

References

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