



Beyond the Baguette



MOVE OVER, PÂTISSERIE. BONJOUR, PAIN!
EXPLORE THE BOULANGERIES BEHIND
PARIS'S BREAD-BAKING RENAISSANCE.

From grainy sourdough to crispy country loaves and classic white flour baguettes, the literal act of breaking bread has evolved in recent years. What's different? Better-quality ingredients, a return to traditional baking methods, and an enthusiastic embrace of ancient grains. Bakeries may mark nearly every corner of Paris, but the breads that emerge from their ovens aren't created equal. These are a few of the places sustaining and strengthening artisan bread-baking in Paris. They ensure the future of *le bon pain* in the city.

BY LINDSEY TRAMUTA
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOANN PAI



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BAKE FROM SCRATCH
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Ten Belles Bread

11th arrondissement
17/19 bis rue Bréguet, 75011
[@tenbellesbread](#)

From the moment they opened Ten Belles, among the city's foremost craft coffee shops, owners Alice Quillet, Anna Trattles, and Anselme Blayney gave equal attention to the food that accompanied their coffee. Creative sandwiches were served on excellent bread, but it wasn't their own. That all changed when the trio opened Ten Belles Bread in an industrial space in the 11th arrondissement, serving as an all-day café and baking lab where they produce giant, oval-shaped sourdough loaves, among other baked goods. In only two years of producing it, they've established a strong client base from chefs and restaurant owners, including Bertrand Grébaut of Septime, Guy Griffin of Café Méricourt and Café Oberkampf, and David Toutain, who all receive bags full of fresh bread daily. Ten Belles Bread's loaf is the perfect balance of soft and sour crumb, with a malty, crackly crust, so identifiable at this point that the most devoted bread lovers can detect that Ten Belles Bread flavor at first bite.



Pain Pain

18th arrondissement
88 rue des Martyrs, 75018
[pain-pain.fr](#)

With an award-winning baguette to his name (he was the 2012 winner of the Best Baguette 'Tradition' in Paris competition), Sébastien Mauvieux's success is entirely due to a career of dedication and discipline that began when he was 15 years old. The owner of Montmartre's Pain Pain cut his teeth in the world of pastry with an apprenticeship at Lenôtre, where he also discovered the art of making bread. In 2015, three years after opening his first Parisian bakery, he brought his combined skills to a colorful, design-forward corner shop on the northern section of the Rue des Martyrs, where locals happily line up for fresh bread and equally-as-divine pastries. What he's done, perhaps better than most, is create an atmosphere that encourages lingering, where marble tabletops and a soft velvet banquette lend comfort to the oft-dreamed about moment of breaking into a crisp baguette, fresh from the oven.



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Boulangerie Utopie

11th arrondissement
20 rue Jean-Pierre Timbaud, 75011
+33 9 82 50 74 48

Childhood friends Erwan Blanche and Sébastien Bruno may have trained as pastry chefs but that hasn't stopped them from establishing Boulangerie Utopie as one of the top bread and pâtisserie shops in Paris. It's in a revived corner shop that the duo has infused a strict commitment to producing 100-percent homemade and handmade breads and pastries (the disappointing reality is that many neighborhood shops work from prepared mixes), using the best untreated raw materials. "We wanted to do excellent French bread the way it should be done," explains Erwan, "and pair it with pâtisseries and viennoiseries that are equally as strong." But that doesn't mean that their offering isn't original. In addition to the universal favorites, Erwan and Sébastien play up unexpected flavor associations in their breads, like muesli, matcha, or activated charcoal, and make a limited quantity of all of their products each day, which allows them to closely control quality. It's all paid off: In 2016, Boulangerie Utopie earned the title of best bakery in France from the TV station M6 on their annual show *La Meilleure Boulangerie de France*.



Jean-Luc Poujauran

No physical space; available at restaurants like Bouillon Pigalle

For 27 years, artisanal baker Jean-Luc Poujauran ran his own traditional bakery (bread, cakes, breakfast pastries) in the 7th arrondissement before shuttering the operation to dedicate his time and attention exclusively to bread. For him, bread is an accompaniment, not an afterthought, to an entire meal, even if that meal is simple and rustic. That vision is the cornerstone of his business—he's developed an extensive network of over 300 restaurant clients to whom he delivers fresh bread daily by bike. In fact, if you find yourself in a restaurant that serves something other than sliced-up baguette, the chances are high that it's organic sourdough from his lab. "You can always tell bread is good when you can't stop eating it," he says. And what makes it worth eating? Precision, the smell of pure wheat, irregular holes in the crumb, and a slightly caramel-y flavor and deep crunch from the crust—the perfect bedfellow for any food.

We recommend dining at Bouillon Pigalle where Poujauran's bread has a dedicated display shelf and comes sliced to perfection with every dish.



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FR

Du Pain et des Idées

10th arrondissement
34 rue Yves Toudic, 75010
dupainetdesidees.com

If anyone can be credited with elevating bread-making in Paris in the last 15 years, it's Christophe Vasseur, a visionary baker who sought to bring tastes beyond the humble baguette. His signature, the Pain des Amis, a nutty, crunchy loaf, now served by many of the city's top restaurants and cafés, spurred a revival in the artisanal, dark loaves that were common across France before World War II. They're more time-consuming to produce but far more nuanced in flavor and with the kind of thick, dense crust that really makes you work for each bite. The dough is made from yeast and wheat flour from the Île-de-France region and is left to ferment for two days. It comes out as a massive 1½-foot loaf meant for sharing or can be purchased in quarter loaves. It can be found front and center in some of the city's most popular restaurants, including nearby Holybelly where it not only accompanies eggs and beans, hash browns, or sautéed mushrooms but enhances them and has become an object of fanatical devotion.



Better Bread, in and out of the Bakery

If there's flavorful, fresh (and often sourdough) bread served in restaurants today, it's because it evolved in lockstep with a broader culinary transformation over the last decade. Bistronomy, a food movement that saw chefs rebelling against the confines of classic cooking and bringing their haute cuisine skills to a casual dining format with a hyper-seasonal, no-rules approach to dining, effectively turned the food scene on its head. It filled the gap between the mediocre bistros and pricey temples of fine dining, did away with the tablecloths and buttoned-up service, and put the emphasis back on substance after years of declining quality and care. Bistronic restaurants were meant to be affordable, transparent in their ingredient sourcing, and unfussy. They were that and more: They put forgotten, wartime vegetables back on menus, diversified their wine selections (organic, biodynamic, etc.), and gussied up even the humblest ingredients, from sardines and mackerel to eggs and chicken.

As bistronic chefs sought to do better for less, all while supporting the many food artisans in the region, change was afoot in bread—an everyday item that had similarly suffered from a lack of quality control and care—with bakers like Christophe Vasseur (Du Pain et des Idées) and Jean-Luc Poujauran leading the charge. Though a fixture of any table, bread in restaurants remains a complimentary accompaniment. Restaurant owners have little economic incentive to invest in “the good stuff.” But as quality, craftsmanship, and provenance were once again heralded as values in the food world, chefs in this spirited movement could not and would not settle for bread that wasn't produced with the same exacting standards they uphold in their own kitchens. Today, neo-bistros, coffee shops, wine bars, and *caves à manger* across Paris have all made a statement by choosing to work with artisanal bread makers, many of whom are mentioned in this story, preserving tradition one loaf at a time.



FR

Chambelland

11th arrondissement
14 rue Ternaux, 75011
chambelland.com

Intolerances to gluten don't have to mean that people settle for supermarket bread substitutes to accompany their meals, even in the capital of gluten. Opened in 2014, Chambelland stepped in as the city's first gluten-free bakery to produce baked goods and leavened breads without any added starches or preservatives. Biologist and longtime bread baker Thomas Tefri-Chambelland, the shop's cofounder with Nathaniel Doboin, tested his gluten-free bread recipe over the course of eight years before it reached his standards. Chambelland's owners acknowledge their breads—made from rice flour and buckwheat sourced from their own mill in the South of France—can't replace traditional French bread but should be eaten as a separate product altogether, one that is equally deserving of its place on the table. Whether it's the five-seed rectangular loaf (poppy, sesame, sunflower, brown linseed, and golden linseed), a variety of focaccias or chambellines, or a sweet log-like bread sprinkled with sugar, they've made gluten-free a legitimate fixture of the bakery scene in Paris—so much so that Alain Ducasse and other leading chefs have it on hand at their Michelin-starred restaurants.





Poilâne

6th arrondissement
8 rue du Cherche-Midi, 75006 (flagship location)
poilane.com

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to call the Poilâne family a bread dynasty. Founded in 1932 by Pierre Poilâne, the bakery quickly became known for its 4-pound wheels of sourdough (called *miches*), also known as country bread, pain au levain, or, as the locals call it, Pain Poilâne®. At 28, Pierre's son Lionel took over, developing a host of other specialty breads, butter cookies called Punitons, and breakfast pastries. After Lionel and his wife died tragically in a helicopter crash in 2002, their daughter Apollonia stepped in and has protected and nurtured the family legacy ever since. Even today, the Pain Poilâne remains their signature item, made the same way it was at the bakery's inception: from Pierre's starter, water, stone-ground wheat flour, and Guérande sea salt, with all-natural fermentation and hand-kneaded dough. Some 15,000 loaves are produced daily in wood-fire ovens and finished off with a P-shaped cut on the top, a trademark of an enduring heritage.



Le Petit Grain

20th arrondissement
7 rue Dénoyez, 75020
lepetitgrainparis.com

The opening of the sharing plates restaurant Le Grand Bain was never the endgame for chef Edward Delling-Williams. It was always meant to be one step in a series of projects that would coexist harmoniously and add value to the development of the restaurant. There's the vision of an urban farm, but first, Edward and his partners saw the potential in a bakery. They opened Le Petit Grain in early 2018, down the street from the restaurant, with a focus on thick sourdough loaves, focaccia, rye, wheat, and multigrain breads, alongside a host of desserts and pastries that run from croissants and peanut tartlets to lamingtons and jam-filled doughnuts (some of which can also be found on Le Grand Bain's menu). As for what makes their bread stand out from the masses, it's through the use of a high-grade flour that allows them to create a dense loaf with a more complex and nutty flavor than the light and fluffy gold standard. Whether you pair their bread with a meal or eat it solo, you can be sure it's on par with the city's best.



The Language of Bread

Terms for Navigating a Bakery Visit

Baguette: Literally translated, “wand” or “baton,” which describes the white bread’s shape. This is the most iconic of French varieties. It gained popularity in the 19th century but is rapidly falling out of favor. It’s worth noting that unlike the “tradition” (see below), the ordinary baguette is made with additives and produced mechanically.

Baguette tradition: The ordinary baguette’s hand-formed, crunchier sibling with pointy ends. It often contains sourdough starter, and the ingredients are legally regulated: flour, leaven, water, and salt—nothing else.

Demi baguette / baguette tradition: A half baguette, and yes, you can absolutely ask for this!

Boule: A round loaf of bread (French for “ball”).

Ficelle: A slimmer version of the baguette, with a lightly crispy crust and chewy crumb (sometimes called *une flûte*).

Pain au levain: Sourdough bread.

Pain de campagne: Country bread.

Pain de seigle: Rye bread.

Petits pains or pavés: Rolls or small specialty breads that may incorporate cheese, onions, sun-dried tomatoes, olives, or bacon bits.

Levain: A bread starter, also known as sourdough, leaven, or wild yeast.

Une miche: A wheel of bread.

La croûte: The crust of the bread.

La mie: What is called “crumb” in English, the soft interior of the bread, and is also used to refer to the irregular patterns of holes inside.

Tranché: Sliced—what most bakers will ask you when you ask for a loaf of any kind.

Bien cuit: Well-cooked! If that’s how you like it, be sure to ask for it. (You’ll hear le *bien cuit* doing the same.) ☑