

Our Daily Bread



Image: Courtesy of Owens Family

**Bread delivery carts outside Owens & Dixon Bakery in Victoria Street, Carlton.
Dale bread was baked on the premises in 1929.**

Have you ever wondered what went into a loaf of bread in the good old days before food labelling? In the 19th century, bakers had a list of permitted ingredients to choose from, as defined by the *Bakers and Millers Statute* of 1865.¹

"All bread made for sale or sold or exposed for sale within Victoria shall be made of pure and sound flour or meal of wheat, barley, rye, oats, buckwheat, Indian corn, peas, beans, rice, or potatoes or any of them and with any common salt, pure water, eggs, milk, barm leaven, potato or other yeast and mixed in such proportions as may be thought fit, and with no other ingredient or matter whatsoever."

But not all bread was as wholesome as prescribed by the Statute. The aluminium compound "alum" was sometimes added to bread flour as a bleaching and bulking agent. The practice was illegal in Victoria and in 1871 five Carlton bakers were fined for selling bread adulterated with alum. Those fined accounted for about one third of the bakers operating in Carlton at the time.²

In 1891 Curt Frederick Reinhold Urban, a Prussian migrant baker of 352 Drummond Street, Carlton, applied for registration of a patent for "An improved manufacture of malted bread".³

LATEST NEWS in the BREAD Line.

No more Complaints of Indigestion after Eating
URBAN'S PATENTED MALTED BREAD:

What causes the indigestibility of bread is the starchy matter therein. By using malt – or better Diastase of Malt – this starchy matter is changed into a substance which saves our stomach a lot of hard work by rendering it easily digestible for those suffering from an impaired digestion. The process adopted in the manufacture of this Malted Bread answers to perfection, as following

analysts shows : "The analysis of Urban's Malted Bread is as follows :-Water, 29.70; fat, 0.70; carbohydrates and gluten, 68.08; ash, consisting of phosphate of lime, magnesia and salt 1.52-100.00. C. R. Blackett, Government Analyst." Keeping a week. Delivered daily. Critiques sent on application. Sole manufacturer and patentee, C. Urban, 352 Drummond St., Carlton.

At the time, the link between the protein gluten and coeliac disease was yet to be discovered, and the starch component of bread was thought to cause digestive problems. People on gluten free or lo-carb diets would be horrified to know that Urban's malted bread contained 68.08% carbohydrates and gluten.

During the depression years many families were struggling to feed their children and in 1929 Dr John Dale, Medical Health Officer for the City of Melbourne, devised a bread recipe to ensure adequate nutrition for school lunches. The so-called "Dale bread" was baked by Owens & Dixon of Victoria Street, Carlton, and distributed locally and to regional areas in Victoria and southern New South Wales. The key ingredients were skim milk powder and wholemeal flour, in the proportions of 3½ ounces (approximately 99 grams) of milk powder to a pound (approximately 454 grams) of flour. Otto Henry Tuck, of the Universal Bakery in Grattan Street, Carlton, came up with a new version of starch reduced bread in 1936.^{4 5}

O.H. TUCK
BAKER AND PASTRYCOOK MANUFACTURER OF
The Famous NEW ERA Starch Reduced Bread
Highly nutritious, perfect in flavor, easily digested.
New Era Bread is a fine source of energy and vitality.
It is one of the best and most economical foods that money can buy.
O.H. TUCK, UNIVERSAL BAKERY
20-26 Grattan Street, Carlton.

Unexpected additives sometimes found their way into a loaf of bread. In 1945, Otto Henry Tuck was charged with selling unwholesome bread that was infested with weevils. The whole consignment was withdrawn from sale and the weevil infestation was traced back to a flour sifting machine, and unhygienic conditions in the bakery. A few years later in 1951, a flour bag label was found inside a half-loaf of bread from Powers Bakery in Rathdowne Street, North Carlton. The cardboard label had somehow survived the baking process and was discovered by a customer when she sliced the loaf.^{6 7}

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References:

- ¹ Victoria. Bakers and Millers Statute (No. CCXLIII of 1865, Section 3)
- ² *Weekly Times*, 7 October 1871, p. 12
- ³ *Oakleigh Leader*, 12 December 1891, p. 5
- ⁴ *The Herald*, 16 July 1929, p. 4
- ⁵ *The Herald*, 4 November 1936, p. 39
- ⁶ *The Herald*, 13 November 1945, p. 8
- ⁷ *The Herald*, 19 February 1951, p. 5