THE FEDERATION OF BAKERS

FACTSHEET No. 18

KEEPING BREAD FRESH

Bread should be stored at ambient temperatures; ideally at room temperature 17°C/63°F.

It is not advisable to store bread in the refrigerator (except in extremely hot weather) as this will speed up the staling process.

Bread for toast can be stored in the fridge as refrigeration does not affect the toasting quality.

You can store bread in the freezer, for example by putting half of the loaf in a plastic bag to use at a later date or to take out slice by slice.

WRAPPED BREAD

- Bread is inherently a very safe product. Sliced and wrapped bread should always be kept in its wrapper which will be marked with storage instructions; the '*best before'* date will be shown on the neck tie or the wrapper and is an indication of the maximum assured life of the bread. Bread is, however, safe and edible after the "best before" date. Generally if bread looks good to eat it will be good to eat. It may last beyond this date but is not guaranteed to do so. Please note that the *'best before'* date is a quality indication as opposed to a *'use by'* date which is a safety indication.

- Once opened, the wrapper should be kept loosely folded under the loaf allowing circulation of air inside the wrapper. It is also advisable to keep the end crust to keep the top slice fresh. Bread will keep fresh for several days at room temperature. However, in **very** hot weather the loaf should be wrapped in polythene or foil and stored in the refrigerator to delay the onset of mould, although this will speed up the staling process.

- Wrapped bread may be kept in a freezer for up to three months. Bags with perforations (holes) should not be used to store bread in the freezer.

CRUSTY BREAD

- Crusty bread and rolls are best eaten on the day of purchase – French sticks will go stale after only a few hours.
- Unwrapped crusty bread should be kept in a clean well ventilated bread crock

or bin. Free circulation of air is essential to keep the crust crisp, so the container should not be airtight.

- Old breadcrumbs will gather mould, so the crock should be thoroughly washed once a week; a little vinegar in the rinsing water will help prevent mould.

REFRIGERATORS

Avoid storing bread in a refrigerator except in very hot weather. The average temperature of most domestic refrigerators is about 5°C/41°F. This is the temperature at which bread stales most quickly.

FREEZERS

The freezer is the ideal place to store bread if you do not want to use it all immediately or by putting half of the loaf in a plastic bag in the freezer to use at a later date or to take out slice by slice. Ideally bread should be frozen as soon as possible after purchase and wrapped bread will keep for up to three months in the freezer.

It can be defrosted whole or slice by slice; it can even be used straight from the freezer for toast by popping a slice straight into the toaster. Defrosting a loaf at room temperature can take a few hours and is the best way. This can be speeded up by defrosting in a microwave (please refer to instruction booklet).

HOW TO REFRESH BREAD

Crusty bread, rolls and buns which have become a little stale or lost their crispness can be freshened by wrapping in foil and placing in a pre-heated oven at 250°C/450°F/gas mark 8 for 5-10 minutes. The bread should be left in the foil to cool down and eaten soon afterwards because reheating causes it to dry out and go stale fairly quickly.

In time, bread will stale and go mouldy.

STALING
When a loaf stales, the crust starts to become leathery while the inside loses its softness. These changes can be temporarily reversed by warming in an oven or by toasting.

MOULD
Newly baked bread is free from mould. However, mould spores, which are always present in the air, can fall on the crust and mould may develop, particularly in warm/moist conditions.