



Lessons in Loaf Baker's Report 2020



Well what a year!

The wheat was growing nicely and then suddenly schools shut due to Covid 19. After an uncertain few weeks we were able to go in and maintain the gardens so we did manage to harvest the wheat at most schools. At one school the mice also seemed to have experienced a similar panic or perhaps they just enjoyed the peace and quiet, but they managed to raid the seeds while we were away.



We returned to teaching in September and re-planned Lessons in Loaf to include social distancing and extra hygiene measures. In October, the first school to take part in Lessons in Loaf this year was Portway. We normally have 90 pupils in one day but with new

restraints of not being able to go within 2 meters of pupils, we split the classes over two days, with one class each day. We were incredibly lucky to have the help of Chris Tomkins and his wife Gillian so the day ran incredibly smoothly.



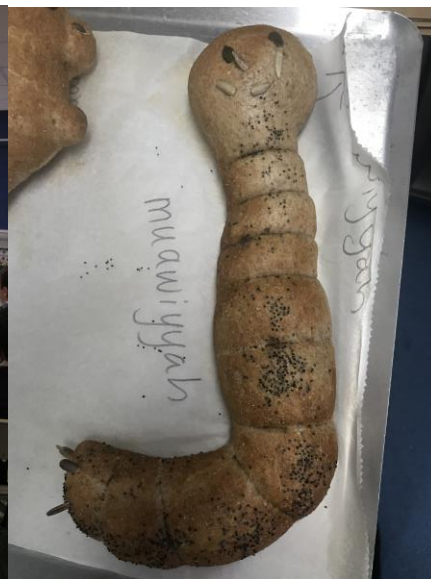
We laid out the tables and chairs for the pupils in the centre of the hall and we had a collection and a returns table, with team leaders from each table assigned the task of collecting or returning equipment. This meant we could stay behind the tables and we used voice amplifiers so that we could be heard through the visors. Pupils washed hands before they entered the room and after and we also had hand washing stations within the room and sanitiser. What was interesting was how much the pupils loved to be given the extra tasks of cleaning the tables themselves!



In November Selwyn primary school enjoyed their Lessons in Loaf. Year 3 classes (60 pupils in total) over two days. There is no hall available at Selwyn so we adapted a classroom and put tarpaulin and sheeting down to protect the carpet. As chef Ali was needing to isolate Chris, Gillian and my Grow Your Own Playground colleague Ren stepped up to run the day with me. After a very early start, getting to school at 6am the room was ready and a great day of hands on learning was had by all.



Pupils find it a challenge to work together as a team so the weighing and measuring of the ingredients is a good way for them to learn this. Each pupil takes it in turn to tip flour onto the scales and the others need to keep a close eye on the dial to make sure they measure the correct weight. One kilogram of flour needs to be weighed in two batches because of the capacity of the scale plate, so they learn how to divide 1000 by two. An extra challenge is that 500g is not marked on the scales so they have to calculate the midpoint between 400 and 600g.



One of my favourite parts of the day is seeing the imaginative loaves that the pupils have designed. Highlights at Selwyn were a snake, a teddy on a swing and a dinosaur. When are we going to see loaves like this for sale in our bakeries?!



Because of the uncertainty in having visitors, three of my Hackney schools wanted to wait until the springtime for their lessons in Loaf. I bought a metal chest to store the wheat in, so fingers crossed the mice will be kept at bay. Globe Primary School who have taken part in Lessons in Loaf-London again this year, have done the growing of the wheat and the harvesting workshops but have also postponed their Lessons in Loaf baking day until the spring. With these new school closures we may be looking at early summer term now.



Mayflower are lucky to have a large hall so this made social distancing much easier for their baking day. It was a cold few days though, so keeping the windows open for ventilation was a challenge. Year 2 pupils take part at Mayflower and we got some fantastic shaped loaves including a man with some very skinny legs!



I would like to thank Ali Noor and Chris and Gillian Tomkins for all of their help so far this year. It is heart-warming how much pupils and teachers have appreciated us running these lessons this year. One pupil at Mayflower was so excited about it and she told me it was the best day of her life.



John Scurr was the final lesson before Christmas. Year 2 pupils, who loved feeling the squishy dough between their fingers and getting their hands messy. When asked about yeast, most children describe it as stinky but by the end they understand that it makes the carbon dioxide air bubbles that causes the bread to rise.



Chris also demonstrated the incredible properties of gluten by washing the dough in water, removing the starch and then he baked the remaining protein ball and the result was a hard, light tasteless lump of bread (?). We explained that gluten is like a football bag/ net holding the carbon dioxide bubbles (balls) inside.



As lessons will be hopefully continuing in the New Year there should be another five schools to take part. It has been a challenge to put new guidelines in place but I am really delighted with how we have safely delivered the lessons this year and pupils are happier than ever to be taking part. Even though it requires more thought, effort, planning and risk, it has certainly be worth it all with the delighted faces when they see their own loaf of bread. They are so proud of what they have achieved and more than ever children really need inspiring lessons like Lessons in Loaf. Having funding meant I could buy the extra equipment I needed such as visors, amplifiers and masks and also pay for the extra cleaning of aprons etc to carry on during this challenging year. Your support ensures that Lessons in Loaf will continue and more pupils will benefit from this experience. Thank you all.

Cassie Liversidge
Grow Your Own Playground