



Homegrown Bread Report

September 2023

For the Worshipful Company of Bakers

This report will cover the 2022-2023 school year and aims to highlight the benefits and challenges of working and delivering 'Homegrown Bread' workshops at my schools in East London. For those of you new to reading my yearly report I would like to explain why I am writing it!

I run a business called Grow Your Own Playground (GYOP)- where we build gardens at schools and then integrate these gardens (using the plants and animals found there) into curriculum linked lessons. We work at 16 primary schools across East London, and over the course of the year work with over 7500+ children. Homegrown bread is just one of the workshops we deliver but it is an important one! We grow our own wheat at school, pupils get to see it growing and they learn how long it takes to grow, and then they get to make it (with some extra flour supplemented) into a loaf of bread to take home.

The Worshipful Company have been supporting the materials for running this lesson for a number of years now, which enables us to have the equipment, ingredients and most necessary clean aprons for all workshops!



Thankfully school life was completely back to normal when we returned to school in September 2022. There was very little or no hand sanitiser in sight and pupils felt okay about putting their hands in the earth to get learning. However, I feel there is now more work than ever to do with this fundamental, elemental process...



Every year the wheat starts off growing well and then it goes through a period when it's not flourishing as I would like...but I have come to the conclusion this is the way with wheat, or perhaps it is simply reflecting the mid-year exhaustion of the teachers! By the summer holiday however, even though our hand sown seeds are often very densely sown in some parts and patchy in others, it is surprising the amount we actually harvest once its bound together.



This photo is of Carpenters Primary School planter at the Pudding Mill Lane allotments in Stratford, next to the Olympic park.



Most of the Homegrown Bread workshops are done with year 3 pupils, so they are around 7-8 years old. We work with the whole year group so that no one misses out, in one hall so most lessons involve around 60 children, who work with us all day. Some schools such as Orchard and Portway have three classes to a year group and so we run those workshops over 2 days with 45 each day.

Among the many hands on skills they experience during this workshop is that they learn how to weigh and measure and they also do some maths, dividing the amount of flour in half so that it can be weighed on the small sets of scales.



After lunch and the dough has proved, we have the demonstration by Chris Tomkins (Liveryman) who shows pupils how to work with the dough. There is always a gasp of disbelief when a hedgehog or turtle is created in front of them. We then open up the floor for questions which I feel is an important part of the day as pupils get to consider what being a 'Baker' is like. Chris was asked by one pupil if he made many baking mistakes and Chris replied that bakers are always learning. I can't thank Chris and his wife Gillian enough for all their support they offer me.

When I ask for feedback at the end of the workshops I get responses such as :

'This is the BEST DAY!' – Selwyn year 3 pupil

'This is better than play time!' - Olga year 3 pupil

'This is the best day of my life!' Aayah Age 7- Bonner year 3 pupil

I am very privileged to be given this opportunity to work with these children and I thank all my GYOP helpers and volunteers to make this project possible and for The Worshipful Company of Bakers for their continued support.



