

If I say **bread**...

what comes to your mind?



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Whether you buy it, share it, or simply love its taste and aroma, this brochure is for you.

Discover more about bread and how your habits can influence your health.

AUTONOME PROVINZ BOZEN – SÜDTIROL  PROVINCIA AUTONOMA DI BOLZANO – ALTO ADIGE
PROVINZIA AUTONOMA DE BULSAN – SUDTIROL

Südtiroler Sanitätsbetrieb



Azienda Sanitaria dell'Alto Adige

Azienda Sanitara de Sudtiroi



Why are we talking about bread?

Bread is more than just food: it **symbolizes culture, tradition, and identity.**

It has always played a central role on tables worldwide. In South Tyrol, almost every valley has its bread. Farmhouse bread is a tradition that brings families together and tells stories. At mountain farms, bread was baked only a few times a year, choosing sunny and windy days to ensure better results and longer storage. Rye was (and still is) the main ingredient of traditional local bread, often enriched with local spices such as cumin, fenugreek, and fennel to enhance flavor and aid digestion. Bread was a precious resource that helped stave off hunger and needed to last for months. Over time, it became hard, requiring a special cutting board called "Grammel" to break it. It was usually eaten soaked in milk, coffee, or soup. It was considered a staple food, essential in daily life.

In cities, things were different: bakers baked bread daily, producing wheat, rye, and barley bread. There was even a purity law that prohibited mixing different flours. White bread made from wheat flour was not an everyday food for common people; it was available at city bakeries and was reserved for special occasions and holidays. Bread still plays a fundamental role in our diet.

Did you know that bread can also affect your health, depending on its characteristics?

The *Food Hygiene and Nutrition Service (S.I.A.N.) of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano*, in collaboration with the *Bakers' Association (hds)*, has launched a project to understand the relationship South Tyroleans have with bread.

What types of bread do you prefer?

How often do you eat it?

Do you know its properties?

Do you have any concerns about potential risks?

Understanding your bread consumption habits will help us to assess its impact on health and improve the information available to you.



Acrylamide in bread: what is it and why does it matter?

Acrylamide is a substance that forms in starchy foods during high-temperature cooking processes such as frying, baking, or grilling, and in industrial food processing above 120°C under low-humidity conditions. The foods that contribute most to acrylamide formation include **coffee** and its substitutes, **fried potatoes, potato chips**, baked goods such as **pizza, biscuits, toast, breakfast cereals, crackers, and bread**. The chemical reaction that leads to its formation gives food the typical “toasted” appearance and enhances its flavor. Acrylamide has been identified as a potentially genotoxic and carcinogenic substance, meaning it can cause DNA mutations and increase cancer risk. In Europe, everyone is exposed to it, but children are particularly vulnerable due to their high consumption of at-risk foods (potato chips, biscuits, bread, toast, crackers, breakfast cereals) and their lower body weight, leading to exposure levels up to 10 times higher than adults. Although there is no safe dose, and it is impossible to eliminate acrylamide from foods, regulatory limits have been set to minimize its presence.

The **good news** is that in the **South Tyrolean bread** we analyzed, the average acrylamide levels were found to be safe and below the limits set by European regulations for all types of bread. No significant differences were observed between white bread and soft rye bread, while dry rye bread (Schüttelbrot) contained higher levels of acrylamide but remained within recommended limits.

For those who consume bread in accordance with recommended nutritional guidelines (50 g for children and 100 g for adults), there are no health concerns for the population over 3 years of age.

Our recommendations

- Avoid overly dark, heavily browned bread crusts and prefer golden-colored bread.
- Choose bread leavened with natural agents (sourdough, mother dough, yeast) and subjected to a long fermentation process.
- When possible, prefer soft bread over crispy bread, as it contains lower levels of acrylamide.
- If you bake bread at home, cook it at lower temperatures for slightly longer. Acrylamide forms more rapidly at temperatures above 180°C.



Bread and salt: watch the quantity!

Did you know that although bread contains less salt than processed foods like snacks or ready-made meals, it is still one of the main sources of salt in our diet? This is because it is consumed regularly and in significant quantities. As you may already know, reducing salt intake is important for cardiovascular health, and even small daily reductions can yield positive long-term effects. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) provides guidelines for safe daily sodium intake, which varies between adults and children.

The table below presents EFSA's recommended daily safe sodium intake levels, applicable to healthy individuals without specific conditions such as kidney diseases. The corresponding salt amounts (in grams) are indicated in parentheses.

Age Group	Safe Daily Sodium Intake
1–3 years	1.1 g (2.75 g of salt)
4–6 years	1.3 g (3.25 g of salt)
7–10 years	1.7 g (4.25 g of salt)
11+ years	2 g (5 g of salt)

Our recommendations

- Choose bread with a reduced salt content, especially for daily consumption.
- Opt for whole grain and fiber-rich bread, such as rye bread, known for its digestive benefits and its ability to improve blood sugar and cholesterol levels.



Does bread make you gain weight? Let's debunk a myth!

You often hear people say, "Bread makes you gain weight," but is that true? The truth is that bread can be part of a balanced diet if chosen carefully and consumed in the right amounts.

Quality first

Not all bread is the same. Whole grain bread is rich in fiber and nutrients. It helps you to feel full for longer and supports good digestion. Choosing bread that is made with less refined flours, is naturally leavened, and free from artificial additives is a smart choice for your health.

The importance of portion size

As with any food, quantity makes the difference. Eating moderate portions of bread, combined with proteins and vegetables, contributes to a balanced diet without affecting weight control.

Remember: Bread is a valuable food that can be part of a healthy and active lifestyle. It just needs to be chosen and consumed wisely.



Our recommendations:

- Keep portion sizes moderate.
- Try to mainly eat whole-grain bread for its added nutritional benefits.
- Avoid processed packaged bread, which often contains added sugars and hidden fats.
- Try not to eat bread along with other carbohydrate sources (pasta, rice, potatoes, or other cereals) in the same meal, to maintain nutritional balance.

Your opinion matters! Help us understand the relationship South Tyroleans have with bread

Participating is quick and easy!

What type of bread do you usually buy? Are you aware of its nutritional value?

Thanks to your responses, we will gain insight into local eating habits related to bread consumption and gather important health information, such as estimating the amount of salt consumed by the South Tyrolean population through this food.

Every response helps us build a more informed and healthier South Tyrol!



**Join us on this journey to rediscover bread,
our daily staple:**

Scan the **QR code** with your smartphone or any camera-equipped device to take our survey.

www.sedicopane.it



Edited by Simona Nascetti and Danilo Doglio –
Servizio di Igiene degli Alimenti e della Nutrizione (SIAN)

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