

VISION

‘Quarantine baking is catching’



It’s like the great Dutch bake-off. Suppliers are struggling to keep up with the demand for flour and yeast. ‘Quarantine baking is catching,’ says WUR consumption sociologist Hilje van der Horst.

Why are we baking bread like mad?

‘This was probably triggered by the requirement to minimize our trips to the shops. As a result, people are buying food for a longer period. One of the things you miss then is freshly baked bread. Home baking is a practical solution, and yeast and bread-making machines were sold out in no time. Then the finished products were shared on social media. People like to project a positive image on Instagram and Facebook, for example with holiday photos or sports photos. If you are home baking, you are saying: look at me doing the right thing. I’m at home but I’m also keeping active and saving on shopping trips, so that’s good. Baking bread also costs time, which many people don’t normally have.’

Wasn’t home baking a trend already?

‘The general trend is actually that we want our meals to be ready quickly, which is what the bread mixes key into. There is also increasing interest in artisanal products and local produce. Back-to-basics products without additives — people want to know what’s in their food. But we don’t necessarily want to make the products ourselves. You can see these trends among the home baking crowd too. Some do it mainly for practical reasons: they use bread mixes and a bread machine. Others buy sourdough and knead the bread themselves, which is time-consuming and difficult. These people enjoy learning a new skill, and it could boost their status as well because producing high-quality bread is not that easy.’

Have you seen other effects from the coronavirus outbreak?

‘There have been drastic changes in how we spend our time. I will be interested to see whether this has an effect in the long term. We had got used to propping our lives full with stuff, activities and experiences. Now we are being forced to slow down and develop new routines. Perhaps this is a good moment to ask ourselves how happy those overfull lives really made us.’ **TL**