



Bread from an Ayurvedic perspective

Germans and their bread are inevitably linked in many people's minds, as German baking is known and loved all over the world. So popular, in fact, that in 2014 UNESCO included local bread in Germany's intangible cultural heritage. According to the German bread register, over 3,000 varieties are produced and sold every day. It is estimated that over 42 kilos of bread are consumed per household each year, with mixed breads made from wheat and rye flours and classic toast enjoying the greatest popularity.

Cereals have played a role in the human diet for over 30,000 years, initially in raw form and for around 22,000 years as cooked cereal porridge. Humans fed on wild sweet grasses and only started cultivating them 11,000 years ago. Targeted culti-



vation ensured that the people of that time became sedentary. The classic sourdough, known today as Hermann, was invented by the Egyptians around 6000 years ago and is still an important basis for making bread today.

Nowadays, bread is part of many people's daily diet and is even eaten several times a day, often for breakfast and a snack in the evening. In Ayurveda, however, bread only plays a subordinate role. Here, cereals are eaten more in the form of porridge, in soups and as freshly made flatbread, such as chapati.

Abdominal pain from bread

Over the last few decades, digestive problems have increased massively in Western countries; many people complain of bloating, flatulence and abdominal pain. Bread plays a key role in this. This is because industrially produced baked goods are often based on genetically modified grains, contain numerous additives to extend shelf life and are subject to time-saving baking processes that can put a heavy strain on digestion. Gluten is then often blamed as the cause, which is certainly often enough the case, as gluten now accounts for over 50% of the protein content of wheat. At the same time, many people notice that they experience fewer or no symptoms after eating bread containing gluten that they have made themselves, so gluten alone cannot always be the culprit.



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So where do the complaints come from?

Several factors play an important role here. In addition to today's very high gluten content, the lack of time in the preparation process is the main reason. A classic sourdough bread goes through a three-



stage process of 8-10 hours each time, whereby the lactic acid bacteria in the dough pre-digest the grain. The bacteria and yeasts activate enzymes that break down gluten and so-called FODMAPs. FODMAPs are short-chain fermentable carbohydrates that are found in cereals, fruit, vegetables and dairy products, for example, in varying degrees and can lead to abdominal discomfort if they are not digested properly in the intestine and can then lead to severe gas formation.

The sugars contained in wheat and rye, known as fructans, are FODMAPs and are hardly broken down in industrial rapid processing, which feeds fermenting bacteria in the intestine and then also causes severe gas formation.

Time is therefore a decisive factor, as the saying goes: "Good things take time".

A long dough rest ensures that the bread is easier to digest, has a longer shelf life and the intestinal microbiome can even benefit from the lactic acid bacteria it contains. A dough rest of just 4 hours reduces FODMAPs by 90% and activates the enzyme phytase, which breaks down the phytic acid contained in whole grains. Phytic acid binds iron and zinc in the intestine, removing them from the food, which can lead to mineral deficiencies. The process of rendering it harmless therefore

ensures improved nutrient absorption and once again speaks in favor of taking sufficient time in the production process.

The industry tries to compensate for the lack of time by adding around 250 artificial enzymes, but this is not really successful.

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In Ayurveda there are no prohibitions, but the choice of food should always be made according to your personal constitution and your own digestive power. Bread can therefore also be consumed consciously and in moderation if it is well tolerated by the individual. However, the production, ingredients and additives should be taken into account.



People with a Vata dominance should tend to be more cautious with bread and yeast; the baking process removes a lot of moisture, which can increase the dry and rough characteristics of Vata. Too much bread can therefore lead to flatulence and constipation. Sourdough breads with spelt flour are particularly recommended, as well as light toasting and spreading with butter or ghee to increase digestibility.

If you have excess Pitta, however, sourdough bread can possibly exacerbate existing heartburn. Rye, millet and corn-based breads should also be eaten with caution, as they have a heating effect, whereas breads made from wheat, spelt and barley are often better tolerated.



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People with a high Kapha content tolerate sour-dough bread made from buckwheat, spelt, millet and rye best. Dry crispbread and rice cakes are also recommended, as they balance out the moist properties of Kapha. Overall, however, bread should only be eaten in small quantities and not every day due to its high nutritional value.

In Ayurveda, freshly baked chapatis or papadams are often served with hot meals. Chapatis are traditionally made from wheat flour, water and salt and do not require any yeast or raising agents. Freshly prepared, they are generally easy to digest. Papadams made from lentil flour offer an alternative. These are rolled out wafer-thin and deep-fried briefly in hot oil in a pan.

If this is too exotic for you and you don't want to give up your beloved bread, but may not tolerate it well, you should take a closer look at sprouted grain bread. During the germination process, valuable enzymes are produced that break down the hard-to-digest protein into easily digestible amino acids and convert the starch. The best-known bread in health food stores and natural food stores is the so-called Essen bread, which is baked at less than 100 degrees and has a particularly low glyce-mic index of less than 50.

Sprouted flour is also available, which can be used for baking at home. This flour is much easier to digest and very rich in nutrients, which are activated and increased by the sprouting process.



Ayurveda also generally recommends toasting bread before eating it, even wholemeal bread, as Agni is increased by heating and this little trick makes any bread easier to digest. Finally, we would like to remind you of the importance of chewing and salivating food well, as digestion begins in the mouth. The starch contained in food is pre-digested during chewing by the enzyme ptyalin, which is only found in saliva. If food is eaten too hastily and swallowed too quickly, the starch enters the stomach undigested and can no longer be broken down sufficiently. This results in fermentation processes, which lead to flatulence, abdominal pain and heartburn, among other things.

Anyone who cannot tolerate bread well should therefore ask themselves the following questions:

- Can I tolerate gluten or do I possibly have a gluten intolerance?
- Do I tolerate home-baked bread better than store-bought bread?
- Do I eat too much bread and too often and/or do I combine bread with toppings that are difficult to digest, such as cheese and sausage?
- Do I eat bread at inappropriate times, such as very late in the evening, and am I overtaxing my personal digestive capacity?
- What alternatives could I buy to the existing types of bread or bake myself?
- Do I have an organic baker in the region who bakes high-quality bread?

The answers to these questions are certainly very individual and can help you to make better decisions and feel much more vital and well after eating.