



Mariners hoists sail in London waters

A traditional loaf loved by 16th century French sailors is creating a splash among British land-lubbers, thanks partly to its low salt content, reports Tamara Lawrence

Developed by London-based wholesale bakery Bagatelle, Mariner's Bread contains 0.4g of salt per 100g and is based on the traditional 'pain brie' from Normandy. This was enjoyed by cod fishermen in the Normandy port of Honfleur, from the 16th century onwards, during their expeditions to Newfoundland. With a tight white crumb, golden crust and long shelf life, the bread was traditionally made with a 'brie' – a large stone on which the dough was crushed, with a long wooden lever to extract the air.

Family inheritance

The recipe uses flour from the Beauce region of France and salted butter from Isigny Sainte-Mère; it was passed onto Bagatelle's MD Jacky Lesellier by her great grandfather François, who was a baker in Honfleur in the late 1880s. Although the brie itself is no longer used, this old family recipe has helped Lesellier develop a low-salt bread which, she says, is delicious

served 'as is', or lightly toasted. The Mariner's loaf is currently sold in Bagatelle's shop in south-west London, as well as being supplied to the company's wholesale customers within the M25. Jacky Lesellier hopes that the increased call for 'healthy' products will mean Mariner's Bread will find a market in health food shops and supermarkets.

Company history

Bagatelle was set up in 1989 by a team of French bakers and pâtissiers. It currently supplies over 50 five-star hotels, clients such as Eurostar and British Airways and some of the best restaurants in London with its range of 50 breads, 37 types of morning goods and over 50 different Continental pastries and cakes. Clients can place orders the night before and products are freshly baked 365 days a year for delivery up to three times a day. Bagatelle also offers a 'traiteur service', which organises parties in London. ■