



Convert your mud kitchen or home corner into a bakery where children can bake, serve and sell beautiful artisan loaves, buns and pastries. As well as prompting plenty of descriptive language and imaginative play, children will increase their knowledge and understanding of the world as they learn about different culinary cultures.

Bread basket

The bread stones are beautifully visual and tactile, providing sensory feedback as children feel with their fingers the same details they observe with their eyes. There's plenty to examine and discuss together, noticing shapes, textures and patterns:

- You might like to place the bread in an intriguing place for children to discover, such as wrapped in a colourful cloth inside a basket or in individual paper bags as if fresh from the bakery.
- Ask questions about the breads to develop children's thinking, vocabulary and observation skills. Have the children seen bread like any of these before? Have they eaten bread like this? Which is their favourite loaf or bun? What shapes and patterns do they have? Would you like to add a filling to them – what would it be?
- Offer some real bread to compare with the stones and so children can taste it for themselves. Which words could they use to describe the bread? Is it soft inside? Does it have a crunchy crust?
- What do we use to make bread? Where does flour come from? Have the children ever seen a field with wheat growing in it? What does a farmer use to harvest the wheat? You might like to find out more about the process of growing wheat, harvesting it, milling it and baking bread.



In the kitchen

The stones are equally at home in an outdoor mud kitchen and a role-play home corner, with invitations for open-ended creative play:

- In the mud kitchen, offer utensils for baking bread, such as baking trays, rolling pins, oven gloves, and measuring spoons and cups. Natural materials such as acorns, bark, dried lentils, sand and flowers can add to the creative baking experience, as well as other sensory ingredients, such as flour, cornflour paste, fragrant herbs, tree bark, and heads of wheat or grasses. Children might like to try combining mud, flour and water to make a dough – with opportunities to talk about how wet or thick the dough is.



- In a home corner, children can have the flexibility to role-play combining ingredients, kneading play dough, baking and eating bread. You might like to offer cooking utensils, serving dishes, plates and cutlery, as well as a selection of other 'foods'.
- The breads could feature in other open-ended role-play invitations, such as a bakery, market stall, café or teddy bears' picnic. You could even have your own role play bake off!
- You can print off the free Match & tidy mat from the Yellow Door website and use this to keep track of the breads when they are not being played with, as well as talking about shapes and matching.

A world of bread

The bread stones allow you to take the learning into other areas:

- Find out more about the places and occasions where the different breads are enjoyed around the world (such as croissants for breakfast in France, saffron buns at Christmas in Sweden or challahs to celebrate Jewish holidays).
- Have go at making real bread together. This sensory experience will help develop important hand muscle strength as children knead, roll, shape and scoop.
- Alternatively, damper bread is simple and easy to prepare and bake over an outdoor firepit or similar (following your setting's safety procedures). Mix 500g of self-raising flour with 300–500ml of water, and divide into twelve portions. Encourage the children to roll their portion into a snake and wrap it around a cooking stick. Let the children hold their bread snake just above the fire and watch it cook for about 5–10 minutes, or until it's golden-brown. Spread the bread with jam or dip it in honey.
- Making play dough together is another great opportunity to practise kneading a soft dough and build hand strength. Talk about how the texture changes from wet and lumpy to smooth and soft after you have kneaded it for a while.
- Make sandwiches together, talking about healthy fillings as you go. Children may be willing to try a new food if it is part of a tasty sandwich they have made themselves. Spreading fillings and cutting ingredients offer more opportunities to develop fine motor skills.
- Enjoy the story of the Little Red Hen, using one of the bread stones as a prop towards the end. You might also like to use other props such as wheat grains, heads of wheat and flour. These could all also form part of a farm explorers table, alongside pictures and books about farming, model tractors and straw. Feeling the difference between coarse wheat grains, fine soft flour and a smooth dough offers a great sensory experience, as well as building children's understanding of where our food comes from.



Books about bread

The Only Way to Make Bread by Cristina Quintero

Bubbie & Rivka's Best-Ever Challah (So Far!) by Sarah Reul

The Little Red Hen by Mary Finch

Seeds to Bread by Sarah Ridley

Get talking – useful words

Loaf, bun, roll, pastry, crust, slice, cut, spread, wheat, grain, flour, dough, harvest, mill, measure, mix, knead, bake.