Bread Poetry

the best of the rest…
Waiting

I pour milk from the brown jug
into the bowl like the woman
on the postcard you sent
from Amsterdam
crumble the bread to make
your favourite pudding
sweeten it with sugar
stir in the fruit, grate the nutmeg
sunlight on my hands
your shadow pegged to my shoulder

Angela Croft
Table
I built it myself, from a door found
in a skip, sanded down and polished until

I could see my face in the wood.
I sit here, at one of the short ends, and lines
crawl towards me like long, brown worms,
like the future read in a palm, the lines
parallel, each following its own path until
the other end of the table. I’ve sat here
for as long as I can remember
(but that doesn’t mean much) trying
to think. There is nothing on my table.
Anything I try to put on it: a bowl of fruit,
a loaf of bread, to make it look nicer –
even me, sitting here, thinking –
is too much, and doesn’t add anything to the fact
of this table, here, that I built, myself.

Annie Muir
Fire Dancer

Her embers dance in the forest
Slowly creeping up the vines, she grows
The red sparks spit along the forest floor
Attracting creatures to watch her show.

“Roll up! Roll up!” the little light whispers,
Hypnotising all to fall and dance along to her red hot song.
Slowly she emerges above the luscious trees
Brushing her fingers along the new green leaves.

All night long she dances
Consuming everything in sight
Non-stop destruction
Until the murky morning light.

Gradually she begins to shrink and fade
And maliciously exits the sooty stage
And with a final crackle and hiss
She blows her last smoky kiss.

Beth Steiner-Richards 7Y
The Dead Must Not Go Hungry

We place food at grandfather’s shrine.

Sunset jewels picked from the market; oranges, peaches, apples, candies made of rice flour and bean paste.

Baba pours tea.
A tiny white cup filled with pale flecked gold.
Baba offers up the cup, pours it on the ground,

and I take my turn:
hold three burning incense sticks.
Hold my father’s father in my thoughts.
Bow three times,
Place the sticks in the altar

and amongst the rising steam
and smoke strings
he is here. I know it.

Christy Ku
Bakery, 1986

Shooed out of the house to buy a bloomer,
I rush to the bakery on my undersized bike.

The queue curves round the shop
like a croissant. I check my watch.
Looking at the encrusted loaves,
I can taste the dry crunch of poppy seeds.

The slanted mirror
that doubles the stock of cottage loaves
reflects my fifteen-year-old face,
hopeful as buttered crumpets.

The scent of swelling dough
settles my breath,
a comfort here not felt at home
that pulls me back like the retraction
of kneading.

Claire Williamson
haiku for the inanimate

here’s to the houseplants
which turn us into mothers,
opening shutters

to the weekly soaps
which show the day has not scrubbed
us of our feeling

to the dough, which turns
even us, demolition
experts, to sculptors

Hannah Ledlie
Crumb

Bread is about time,
And the way time moves
From evening to morning
From the dough to the crumb
Left on your dark shirt
Like a star in the sky fading
Morning to evening,
Evening to dawn.

Ian McMillan
How To Belong

At Jewish youth club we all wore Rock Against Racism badges and danced to *Glad To Be Gay* - girls in one ring, boys in another.

They ate ham sandwiches when their parents weren’t looking yet scorned me for Smokey Bacon crisps and going to school on Yom Kippur.

The Evangelicals lured us into their church hall with ping pong then tried to keep us with singing and prayers and Jesus. They wanted all of us.

*Jill Abram*
A Daisy Chain of Bakers

The kitchen infused with the smell of warm bread
Nana takes a loaf from the oven
Wearing her mother’s oven gloves
The ones she embroidered as a child
Daisy chains on faded blue cloth
Her mother’s hands and now her own
Inside an object singed with memories
Of one who taught, the other who watched and
Listened to stories kneaded in dough
The history of family baked in loaves
Wholemeal, Bloomer, Sourdough
Her hands and now my own
The inheritor of methods and oven gloves
Bringing the ingredients of family together
With a Dark Rye recipe of my own

Julie Wilson-Bokowiec
Daily Bread

My father never taught us to pray but I thought there was something like ritual in this:

the way he held a mass of bread and split it open, cutting into the white as morning slid to afternoon. There are only so many ways to eat out of the hollows of yourself, he’d say:

the tenderness of bread between your palms, the passing of it from hand to mouth.

Like father to child. Like animal. I used to think that his loaves were bodies not unlike glass – made smooth with heat, ready to be undone again to nothingness. As if all that had made them would disappear, that it would forget his movements from just hours before: kneading dough with the same grace and anger of driving a car, the wind-curve of his hand, steering. Whilst he baked, I thought about all that flour and water, the darkness outside flowing into itself, the smell of baking bread.

The waist-high grass and the something inside of us, waiting to be fed.

Lucy Thynne
Weekend in Cornwall

Ours was the mud road,
The dark stones, the wet dog;
Ours was the solitude,
Diluted air and cow-breath fog;
Ours, too, the sea pinks, the seal’s head,
The cold slate sea; ours were the deep lanes,
The steep coves and narrow lees.
Ours was the sinking sun and
The lobster creel on the empty shore;
Ours was the cuttlefish and
The cottage with the yellow door.
Ours was the old church,
The barrel vault of ancient oak;
Ours the carved columns and
The tombstone like an artichoke.
Ours was the little bridge,
The foaming rill and calming pools,
Ours the contemplation of the waves
That turned the humble stones to jewels.
Ours was the gulls’ call,
The sparrow hawk set in air,
The hours spent with book in hand,
The aga and the rocking chair.

Macaque
This Is Not A Loaf Of Bread
This is not a loaf of bread
This is daily sanctuary
This is breakfast in bed
Or beans on toast for tea.

This is not a loaf of bread
This is shared community
This is a soup-dipped crust
Or a picnic lunch for three.

This is not a loaf of bread
This is tasty alchemy
This is a gravy soaker-upper
Or a gourmet chip butty.

This is the not a loaf of bread
This is a crafted recipe
Of sun and rain and earth
And oven-baked poetry.

Polly Hall
Givers this day

You don’t have to take two slices and put crisps or a fried egg between them, but you could do.

You don’t have to cut a slice and spread it thick with butter and jam, but you could do.

You don’t have to keep a couple of slices to toast later, but you could do.

You don’t have to think about people who don’t have daily bread, but you could do.

You don’t have to give a slice to a friend or a neighbour, but you could do.

You don’t have to give the cost of a loaf to someone else, but you could do.

You don’t have to be givers this day, but you could be.

Yes, you could.

You really could.

Rob Walton
### Serving suggestions

To help heal a heart that’s hurt, carve into doorstoppers and serve with Dad’s Every Vegetable Soup,

Or, on wet dog days, during rainy holidays, slather two slices with butter and butty them together with Nan’s round cut lard fried chips, squished in-between.

Keep stale crusts for Mum’s Brum Butter Pudding sweet, custardy and filling.

Always console with toast.

Share generously

To ease loneliness or enmity,

Eat wolfishly and messily.

Make crumbs for the birds.

*Tracey Hammett*