



Basic Bread Instinct...

How do you know which bread is suitable for vegans and where to get that bread on Aruba?



We have been eating bread since around 8000 BC. That bread differs a whole lot from what we have now come to associate with bread, but it goes to show just how far our relationship with wheat...with flour...with bread goes. Bread is still an important staple food in many countries. But an important questions to ask is, which breads are vegan? You would think pretty much all, but the opposite is true. Especially when it comes to commercial bread making, aka - most of the breads sold in the supermarket nowadays. The first versions of the breads that we know today, let's call these first versions the originals (OG's).

These OG's contained 4 basic ingredients - flour, water, salt and yeast.* These OG's, they were simple breads, basic and honest. They were pretty straightforward; what you saw, was what you got. Now let's fast forward to 2019 and there are so many bread options. Why has it become so difficult for us to be able to trust our Basic Bread Instinct? This is due to the ingredients used, nowadays we cannot begin to guess what ingredients are being used per bread and/or per brand. There are so many surprises when it comes to ingredients, especially hidden ingredients.

What are some important tips & tricks, when it comes to finding out if a bread is vegan or not?

Before starting the process of dissecting every single ingredient stated on the product label, use the below stated questions:

- THE CRUST & CRUMB, is the crust tender or crispy, is the crumb tender or chewy? Yeast breads are divided into 2 major categories: lean and rich doughs.

Lean doughs are used for crusty artisan breads like baguettes and contain little to no sugar or fat. Sourdoughs are lean doughs without the addition of any sugar or fat, these breads have a crisp crust, chewy texture and an open crumb (holes in the crumb). Rich doughs create breads with a tender crust and the crumb is also going to be tender. These breads have little to no holes, think of brioche and challah. Rich doughs contain larger amounts of sugar and/or sweeteners (e.g. honey) and fats. Fats being butter, eggs or milk. These tenderize the dough by coating and shortening the gluten strands, creating a softer crust and a more tender crumb that lean doughs do not have. Before I even start to look at a label, I check if the bread has a tender crust and crumb. If it does, that means the bread contains softeners/tenderizers and I skip these breads.

- Look for the words ENRICHED BREADS

Some supermarkets section the breads by a 'rustic & artisan bread section' and an 'enriched bread section'. The words enriched breads say it all, these breads have been made 'richer' by using rich ingredients such as butter, eggs or dairy products. When it says Enriched Breads, just skip those.

- THE ALLERGEN WARNING the perfect one glance check!

Most food allergies are caused by peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, sesame seeds, fish, shellfish, soy, lupin and wheat. An allergen warning is intended to give you a quick overview of which one of those allergens the product contains, making it the perfect cheat sheet to quickly check if the product is potentially vegan or not. As soon as I see the words eggs and milk, I am out and I know that that bread is not for me.

- DON'T BE SHY, JUST ASK STAFF!

I know this is a pretty logical thing to state 'just ask', but a lot of times we tend to only ask about products that are made in-house. We tend to assume that those are the only breads, supermarket staff will have knowledge about. But don't be shy or underestimate the knowledge of supermarket staff. More and more people are going vegan and supermarkets are stepping up to the plate when it comes to being able to give the proper information.

And if it so happens that they do not know, the more questions people ask the more they will be forced to educate themselves about the products being sold. That is never a bad thing to me.

Still not sure if the bread is vegan?

If after applying the above stated tips and after going over the label, you are still not sure whether a bread is vegan or not - send an email to the producer of that bread.

If the packaging has a website and the website states a contact email, just send an email.

Many of these large companies are happy to oblige with questions regarding their product being vegan or not. If a company is unwilling to help with the desired information, that to me is a red flag and a big no no. If no transparency can be given when it comes to ingredients used, that is not a product I would like to consume.

Some non-vegan bread ingredients to look out for:

- **Milk**
- **Cream**
- **Lactose**
- **Cheese (parmesan and cream cheese are often used as flavorings in bread)**
- **Butter & Ghee (ghee is clarified butter, often used for naan)**
- **Casein (also known as caseinate or casinate)**
- **Whey**
- **Eggs**
- **Enzyme (Phospholipase, it is a commonly used enzyme that is derived from pig pancreatic tissue)**

Some bread ingredients that can be either vegan and non-vegan, it would be best to contact the company when in doubt:

- **Monoglycerides and Diglycerides :**
Monoglycerides and diglycerides are food additives used to blend together certain ingredients, such as oil and water, which would not otherwise blend well. The source may be either animal or plant based.
- **Lecithin :**
Lecithin can be found in many foods, including soybeans and egg yolks. More and more companies are starting to state whether the lecithin used in their product is animal derived or plant based by adding the source of the lecithin on the label as well, for example:
Soy Lecithin, Sunflower Lecithin, Rapeseed Lecithin, Milk Lecithin or Lecithin derived from eggs.
- **'Enriched with vitamins'**
Most flours get enriched, because of the loss of vitamins as a result of the refining process. Meaning these vitamins were initially stripped away from the flour only to be added back artificially; B vitamins such as Iron, Riboflavin, Niacin, Thiamine and Folic Acid.

The following ingredients can be derived from vegan or nonvegan sources, most are often synthetically produced and therefore considered to be vegan ingredients. Be sure to double check these:

- **Enzymes:**
Enzymes are large proteins that act as catalysts to speed up reactions without themselves being changed. Enzymes are not living organisms themselves. They can be derived from fungus, animals, plants and bacteria. Generally, the enzymes used in bread are fungal based. But as stated above, there are other sources - some examples of other enzymes and their sources:
 - **Rennet, animal**
 - **Trypsin, animal**
 - **Lactase, fungal**
 - **Lipase can be animal or fungal**
 - **Papain, vegetable**
 - **Pectinase, fruit**
 - **Protease can be either animal, plant, bacterial, or fungal**
- **Dough conditioners/enhancers.**
These are used to improve the texture, flavor and appearance of the bread. Some to look out for:
 - **L-cysteine: commonly used as a dough conditioner and flavor enhancer. Some sources of L-cysteine are duck feathers and human hair. But this can also be derived from plants.**
 - **Sodium Stearoyl Lactylate & Calcium Stearoyl Lactylate. These can be either animal or plant based, unfortunately the source is generally not stated on the label.**
 - **DATEM, this is short for 'Diacetyl Tartrate ester of Monoglyceride'. What is it? It is a blend of several different emulsifying agents. While many of these agents are plant-derived, many are also animal-derived. Some digging required to find out if it is 100% plant derived.**
- **Cultured dextrose**
This is a food preservative derived from dairy cultures.

Where do I (easily) buy bread that is suitable for vegans on Aruba?

I am sure there are more options, but these are my go to three locations for a quick in-and-out bread purchase. In no particular order:

- Superfood located in Bubali:

- **Sourdough / Zuurdesem, be sure to read the label as for some of the sourdough loafs can contain cream cheese.**
- **Ezekiel bread, it is a healthy and tasty vegan bread and an excellent protein source.**
- **Looking for a GF vegan bread, Superfood sells DeLand GF & Vegan bread - look for it in the freezer section. It has been a while since I last purchased this myself. But I am certain that if they do not carry the DeLand itself, they will surely have another GF vegan option available.**

- Save more food stores located in Noord:

- **Steenoven Baguette Blanc**
- **Steenoven Baguette Meerzaden**
- **Rustikaal Baguette Blanc**

Save more sells artisan baguettes from 'Brood zoals vroeger', I buy the baguette blanc, meerzaden and rustikaal baguette blanc. After visiting their website I contacted the company via email and simply asked if their baguettes were vegan friendly. It turns out they are. The baguettes do not contain milk or milk products, but are made in a facility where milk & milk products are processed. This allergen warning on their website is intended for people with severe allergies where even the smallest amount of cross contamination could cause an allergic reaction. When I decided to adapt a vegan lifestyle, I decided to not avoid products that have all vegan ingredients but are made in a facility where non-vegan ingredients are also processed.

- Ling & Sons Supercenter located in Schotlandstraat, Oranjestad:

- **Ezekiel bread is available at this supermarket.**
- **For my vegan GF friends, check out there large assortment of GF breads by Food for Life. Food for Life is the company that produces Ezekiel as well. How awesome is that? Vegan, GF and in available at Ling & Sons - you can find these breads in the freezer section in the bakery department.**

May this post help with creating your Basic Bread Instinct!

Source:

- [The Vegetarian Resource Group](#) this is a very informative site regarding vegan and non vegan ingredients, be sure to check it out!

Book recommendations:

- [Flour Water Salt Yeast: The Fundamentals of Artisan Bread and Pizza](#)

No, this is not sponsored :) I just seriously love this book so much that I spread the word about it as much as I can!

- Another goodie is [The Bread Baker's Apprentice: Mastering the Art of Extraordinary Bread](#)