

The Oven

Until the end of the 19th century families in Bagnes baked their own bread in the communal bread oven (*four banal*). Remote communities like Sarreyer continued this practice much longer than other places. In 1907, during the construction of the school, a vaulted oven with a dough proving room was installed. Bread

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was baked three times a year on fixed dates (January 20 , May 20 and September 10) following a rotation

system established within the community. At four o'clock in the morning the men would light the oven and then bake the bread - each loaf would take an hour. Large families often baked around sixty to a hundred loaves of bread, each weighing three kilos. While the building was being renovated in 1959 the vaulted oven was destroyed.

In 1990 the municipality of Bagnes bought the former dairy. Along with the association *Les Amis du Moulin et du Four à pain de Sarreyer*, they built a new communal bread oven as well as a dining hall and kitchen which were available for the village community.

Quote from Adrienne Besse:

"Godfathers and godmothers would make a small loaf of bread for their godchildren — we called it a *michon*. They would mark the first letter of their names on it. I would eat it warm, I really loved warm bread."

— *Adrienne Besse, born in Sarreyer in 1922*

Image Caption:

"Image inspired by a photo by Max Kettel, *Bread Making*, Verbier, 1940, Médiathèque Valais–Martigny."

The content of this educational trail was created by the association *Les Amis du Moulin et du Four à pain de Sarreyer*, Sarreyer 2020 – www.sarreyer.ch