

## Did You Know?

When you buy a loaf of freshly baked bread or a bowl of cereal or a box of crackers, you barely think about the work the baker put into it. And you almost certainly never think beyond the baker, say to the ARS research labs strategically placed in different wheat growing regions of the country. These labs work to ensure there will always be a continuous supply of wheat to meet world demand for products like flour, breads, cereals, cookies, crackers, pasta, beer, and other wheat-based products.

For more than half a century, ARS scientists have helped elevate wheat's status as a high-quality, nutritious food. You know that "San Francisco" sourdough bread that many people find so irresistible? Researchers at the ARS Western Regional Research Center in Albany, CA, made it possible for San Francisco-style sourdough bread to be baked anywhere in the world—thanks to an ARS discovery of how to grow a certain yeast used in sourdough.

Among the different wheat classes are hard, soft, white, red, and durum. Soft wheats are used to make pastries, cookies, crackers, Asian noodles, and flat or hearth breads, such as pita bread. Researchers at the ARS Western Wheat Quality Laboratory in Pullman, WA, and the ARS Soft Wheat Quality Laboratory in Wooster, OH, evaluate soft white wheat. Hard wheats are used to make the everyday loaves of bread we've come to love. This is because hard wheat has higher gluten, which is what gives bread its mixing strength. ARS' Center for Grain and Animal Health Research Laboratory in Manhattan, KS, evaluate hard wheats, and researchers at the ARS Cereal Crops Research Unit in Fargo, ND, evaluate durum and hard wheat quality.

ARS scientists helped the wheat industry create a new subclass of soft wheat with higher protein content—a multifunctional soft wheat. This creation makes it possible for the baking industry to use soft wheat for a range of consumer products to take advantage of extended commercial markets. It

gives crackers and other "delicate" wheat products their crispness without having to blend in hard wheat, thereby reducing production costs.

Still other ARS labs are identifying ways to fight and prevent major wheat diseases and pests, and are breeding new wheat varieties to ensure wheat growers worldwide meet crop demands. They know that U.S. wheat quality and sustained production is key to competing in the world market.

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