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# The bread of Armenia

## Before you read:

Men and women both play their part in making a popular kind of flat bread.



Many countries have some kind of bread that is their pride and joy. France has baguettes, Italy has focaccia and ciabatta, India has naan. The small but ancient country of Armenia, in the Caucasus mountains, has lavash.

Making lavash is difficult. It needs several people with special skills and special equipment. It's not something that can be easily made in the kitchen.

## Special ovens

When it comes to lavash, men usually make the ovens. The ovens are upside-down cones made of bricks, so the lavash can be baked on the very hot sides.

Men also make the cushion over which the lavash is stretched to give it its shape. These cushions can be filled with wool or hay.



## A love for wheat

Like many people around the world, Armenians believe wheat is a very important grain.

People celebrating births and weddings will use wheat seeds as part of the decorations. Special breads will be served. A new bride has a piece of lavash pinned on her shoulders for luck, wealth and life.

## Shaping the dough

Traditionally, women make the lavash. They gather in a home to mix the dough and light the fire. The dough is made using yeast, flour, water and sugar.

Once the ingredients are mixed, the dough is left to rise in a warm place. It is then divided into balls and left to rise again.

When the balls have risen, they are stretched over the cushions to make a thin flat bread that is slapped onto the side of the hot oven. The whole process takes time and skill.

## Quality time

Girls learn to make lavash from their mothers, older sisters and aunts. The time spent this way is precious, allowing them the chance not only to learn, but also to be part of the wider family. Often the women will sing songs while baking and pass on lessons about history.

## Breaking bread

The English phrase "break bread" means to share a meal with someone. In Armenia, people help to bake the bread, take part in the whole process, and then get to eat the meal.

## Dipped or wrapped

The best thing about lavash is that it is like a blank page on which to create a tasty meal. Usually in Armenia it can be used to carry cheese from plate to mouth. It is also ideal for picking up dips like hummus (made from chickpeas) or flavoured oils. It can also be wrapped around vegetables or roasted meat.

Written by Diane Anderson

## Quick questions

- 1 Where is Armenia?
- 2 Who usually makes lavash?
- 3 What kind of grain is used to make it?

## FUN FACTS!

- Armenia has its own unique alphabet. It was invented in 405AD by Saint Mesrop Mashtots and it has 38 letters!

**say it**

Phrases from this story

Armenia  
亞美尼亞

pride and joy  
珍藏

equipment  
設備

bake  
烘

dough  
麵團

process  
過程