

Bread in Iranian cultural heritage: The Bread Museum in the holy city of Mashhad (as a model)

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Abstract: The Iranian city of Mashhad holds a special place in the hearts of Iranians and Muslims, as it houses numerous religious monuments and shrines thanks to the shrine of the eighth Imam of the Ahl al-Bayt, Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (peace be upon him). It is surrounded in all its aspects by heritage monuments rooted in various eras, along with natural landmarks and magnificent and beautiful tourist sites. Among these landmarks, which combine heritage and modernity, is the city's Bread Museum, the first in the Middle East visited by tourists upon their arrival to the holy city. The museum contains various types of bread-making tools, which hold a special place in the nutritional composition of the peoples of the world in general and the people of Iran in particular. The social, cultural, and economic history of bread also reflects the symbolism of peace and tolerance among peoples, as its abundance and diversity in its manufacture and exchange with others are among the most important indicators of civilization. The museum traces the history of the nutritional and cultural status of bread and its types in terms of form and technology. By relying on the historical approach in making use of archaeological data, historical sources, religious and mythological texts of ancient Iran, as well as making use of the descriptive and analytical research approach by studying the details of the bread museum in the holy city, the results showed that grains were the most important material for preparing and making bread in historical Iran. Despite the use of modern industrial ovens that made bread production on a large scale possible, the old method of preparing bread on hot ash is still used without abandoning the previous methods of preparing bread.

Keywords: bread, heritage, culture, museum.

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Introduction

The high nutritional value of bread made it occupy a prominent position in ancient Iranian culture and some traditional types of bread in contemporary Iran, because it kept pace with eras of hunger and prosperity and forms of social and economic communication. It deserves to have institutions established to document its history and bestow symbolic and cultural meanings on it inspired by the interaction of the ordinary person with bread and baked goods in his simple daily life, support the local baker, and innovate new forms of baked goods stemming from the community environment, developing existing ones, and establishing a museum that collects examples of baked goods, their local cultures, and their development throughout history. Therefore, the bread industry represents an important cultural indicator that distinguishes the civilization of ancient societies from primitive societies that depend on hunting, raw food, and gathered fruits for their food. The anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss is the most prominent person who presented the theory of measuring civilization and culture through cooking in his book (The Raw and the Cooked), as there are summer baked goods in society, winter baked goods such as thick wheat bread, and baked goods sweetened with honey and flavored with spices. Therefore, the smell of bread can improve the mood. Bread goes through a life cycle in society that begins with planting wheat, then harvesting it, storing it, grinding it, and then making bread dough. Rural families who worked in agriculture possessed all of these stages, and then it

was natural for bread and its manufacturing tools to appear in the memory of society a lot through popular proverbs. The proverb was used to describe the prosperity of the family whose mistress was skilled at making baked goods, and there was hardly a house without an oven inside it for making bread. Therefore, it was difficult to find shops to sell bread in the past due to the ease of making it, because it was the minimum of subsistence and the main requirement for the components of the traditional kitchen. The dispossession of factories from the bread-making profession and baked goods represented a social turning point in the demise of many of the values associated with them. Homemade breadmaking was a means of differentiation among women and a criterion for girls' marriage prospects, especially for saleable baked goods such as qursan and klijah. Daily bread required long periods of preparation, requiring waking up at dawn, which left an impression of a girl's seriousness and constant accomplishments. Moreover, it provided a necessary consumer food for society in terms of its abundance, variety, and manufacturing ingredients. This social interest in bread stems from the importance of imbuing heritage with social and cultural meanings. The importance of bread to the Iranian people and the general image of the social and spiritual aspects of bread in Iranian society are among the other topics covered and addressed in this research. This research also explores the topic of bread in Iranian heritage, given its significant significance in the history of human civilization in general and its influence on other civilizations. The research also mentions the

various types of bread in Iran and compares classic and modern bread.

First: Research Questions: In this context, a number of questions come to mind that serve as keys to the research, as follows:

- What is the history of Iranian bread?
- What role did bread play in nutrition and culture in ancient and contemporary Iran?
- What are the types of authentic and traditional Iranian bread?
- What are the similarities and differences between classic and industrial bread?
- What is the role of the Bread Museum in preserving an authentic cultural heritage in the lives of the Iranian people in general and the community of Mashhad in particular?

Second: The importance of the study: Cereals in general, and wheat and bread in particular, have played a major role in human life since the first human beings first set foot on earth. Their resistance to harsh climatic conditions and ability to adapt to agricultural practices have made wheat a unique crop, arguably the most important plant grown on our planet. Thanks to its large agricultural area and low price, it is the cheapest of all foods. Wheat has also represented a significant portion of the Iranian household food basket in recent times. As the most important component of bread, it has been recognized as a historical diet. Moreover, beliefs about wheat as more valuable than just a simple nutritious food item have received significant attention. Bread has received significant attention as an essential and indispensable food item. The importance of this work is to document and present information and images about the Bread Museum in the holy city of Mashhad by conducting a direct field survey of the museum to highlight the historical and cultural aspects of Iranian foods, of which bread is the most common and consumed food in Mashhad society, prepared from grain flour. Despite this importance, little research has been conducted on the subject of this research.

Third: Research Objectives: Based on the research questions, the research aims to identify traditional breads still baked using traditional methods in clay, stone, or teak ovens in the holy city of Mashhad.

- Understand the history of Iranian bread.
- Understand the role bread played in nutrition and culture in ancient and contemporary Iran.
- Identify the types of authentic and traditional Iranian bread.
- Identify the similarities and differences between classic and industrial bread.
- Investigate the role of the Bread Museum in preserving an authentic cultural heritage in the lives of the Iranian people in general and the community of Mashhad in particular.

Fourth: Research Concepts:

- **Bread:** In popular culture, we mean by it a blessing, a livelihood, and provisions. It is the primary food item for millions of the world's poor and rich. It has contributed to the emergence of civilizations with their own customs and lifestyles, in addition to the diversity of food dishes, not only in their names but also in their ingredients. Bread differs in its name, ingredients, and even its shape from one country to another (Shaalán, 2002, p. 9).

- **Culture:** That complex whole that includes everything that humans have created and innovated in terms of ideas, objects, and tools, beliefs, arts, morals, customs, and everything that humans have acquired as individuals within society. Culture keeps pace with civilization, but it is not limited to the advanced and developed aspects of society. Rather, culture encompasses life in all its forms, both simple and complex (Kosh, 2007, p. 122). It refers to the set of social customs invented by human groups and transmitted among them: language, dress, crafts, historical heritage markers, and others (Idris, 2016, 95).
- **Heritage:** Everything that has reached us, written in any science or tangible in any art form, produced by thought and action in human history throughout the ages (Al-Tuwaij, 2011, 11). In another definition, it refers to all cultural assets, both fixed and movable, inherited by the current generation from their ancestors and possessing exceptional cultural and civilizational value, whether material, such as buildings and artifacts, or moral, such as popular customs and traditions that have remained in circulation among people, such as celebrations, deeply rooted beliefs in the minds of individuals, and skills acquired through handicrafts and arts (Sheniti, 1990, 16). It represents the continuation of culture and its actual practice within society as a legacy and data passed down from generation to generation.
- **Museum:** A permanent, non-profit institute serving society and its development, open to the public, in which specialized research is conducted on material evidence of man and his environment, which is collected, preserved and presented to the public for the purpose of study, education and entertainment (Al-Hajji, 2014, 556).

Theoretical Framework:

First: Theories Explaining the Research: Functionalism and structuralism were used in this study. Functionalism is the analysis of social phenomena against their consequences for the entire social system. Followers of this school believe that the components of a social system are closely interconnected and interdependent, with the outcomes and effects of each component determining the survival of the entire society. Therefore, researchers are required to recognize the consequences of objective phenomena and interpret them as broader social systems.

Structuralism is a theoretical school of anthropology that has a wide range of varieties, but it is mainly divided into "structural functionalism" in British sociology and anthropological structuralism in French systems. Radcliffe-Brown and Claude Lévi-Strauss are prominent figures in the British and French structuralist schools, respectively. Structuralism is not limited to anthropology; it has found its way into various branches of the humanities, given that bread is the staple food for most people worldwide in a society (Fakuhi, 2015, 171).

In the current study, Claude Lévi-Strauss (raw and cooked) was very useful in this area. Food has become an important factor in this research because it represents one of the basic needs of individuals (Richards, 2002, pp. 3–20). In addition to its value as human nourishment, it reflects the social identity of groups. A repository of collective traditions and a means of self-representation and cultural exchange, given the strong relationship between food and identity, it is not surprising that globalization is viewed as a destabilizing factor. However, globalization can have

positive outcomes, contributing to raising awareness about food issues among communities (Harvy, 2009, pp. 133–144), reinventing lost local food traditions and recipes, and using them as a starting point for interpreting past traditions. The exhibits in these museums generally reflect the evolution of agricultural practices, tools used, and the impact of climate on food and eating habits, etc., but their meanings often become secondary to the study of individuals, governments, economies, peoples, and environments. Food museums have recently been established as cultural sites that document and display food and its various methods (Williams, 2013, pp. 229–237), unlike history and nature museums, where the focus is on the product and its interpretation. Food preparation, celebrations, and its social and cultural significance may be limited to specific regions or specialties. These may be repositories for tools and machinery used in food production and agriculture, as well as kitchen and dining utensils and furniture. They may display plant species, raw ingredients, finished products, cookbooks, historical documents, and photographs of rural life. Museums may focus on food culture in its broader sense. For example, the Food Museum in Switzerland showcases the history of food and human nutrition around the world, and in France, the Musée du Cité du Vine tells the history of this product through the ages and its various types in different regions. Exhibitions are dedicated to local products and culinary heritage, such as the Musée du Pau, which is dedicated to Portuguese bread, and the Salzmuseum, which recalls the history of salt production in Germany. In addition to displaying objects and handicrafts, food museums also invite their audiences to participate in the development, creation, and learning about food culture through live demonstrations, workshops, and events (Williams, 2013).

Second - History of Bread in Iran: Bread making has a long history in Iran due to the inextricable relationship between Iranians and bread. There is a great diversity in cooking methods and raw materials, and the preparation of different types and methods of wheat and other agricultural products. For example, local bread throughout the history of Iran from the past to the present, such as making dough in rural areas, followed by an overview of bread baking techniques in cities and its available types. Studies and historical evidence have confirmed that all types of grains, particularly wheat and barley, were cultivated during the Assyrian era. Wheat bread may have been common in Iran since that time, as it was the main food of Iranians for at least three thousand years, given the vastness of Iran and its history (Karizaki, 2017, 1-2). According to studies, the first sign of bread in Iran dates back to the remains of the monastery of wheat and the double-domed ovens in Tell al-Harir around 3000 BC. There is evidence indicating that wheat was cultivated in Dehloran, the ancient city of Elam, since ancient times (Floor, 1398, 11). Iranians made it in various forms and various ways over different centuries and in special ways in different ovens located in the ground with teak wood or in suitable baking vessels. It was baked and developed. It can be said that all types of traditional bread in Iran have a long history. They are made from flour of different grains, from wheat to barley flour and rice flour, using a suitable kneading tool and adding yeast. It is prepared and baked with a pillow called a yoke in some parts of Iran, among the main components of bread making in Iran (Restelli and Mori, 2016). Most of the original and traditional types of bread are made from wheat flour. In addition, barley flour was also used in some villages in the past and present, after it was known that this bread has high properties, making it more important than it was in the past (Shirazi and Tenberg, 2012, 17-19). It is consumed according to its nature, although bakeries

have replaced Iranian bread ovens and kitchens in all cities and even villages. Most Iranians use sangak, lavash, barbari, and taftoon bread, even baguettes and industrial bread. However, there are still types of traditional Iranian bread cooked in cities that have been transmitted from many civilized environments, such as the Nile Valley, Mesopotamia, the Levant, and Sindh, as well as the Greek and Persian civilizations, and other peoples who knew how to make bread and had experience in growing, grinding, and kneading grains. They benefited from this experience, including the machines used to make bread, which were similar, such as the mill, the oven, and the oven, until these machines and modern electric ovens were invented.

Third: Bread in Iranian Culture: Bread is important in Iranian culture. It is a sacred and practical element in almost all Iranian tables, including daily dining tables, sacrificial tables, prayer tables, ritual tables, and others. It has a place in many religious and ritual ceremonies, as well as in the tangible and intangible culture of the Iranian people. Therefore, the common saying "May God not take bread from your table," which a guest says to the host, indicates the importance of bread in Iranian culture (Tafadali, 1354, pp. 31-32). Due to its ethnic, geographic, and lifestyle diversity, Iran is one of the most diverse countries in terms of bread. Bread represents livelihood, sustenance, and provisions, along with beliefs and rituals that are part of its heritage and encompass everything a people believe in regarding the outside world. These rituals provide insight into the people's character, nature, and way of thinking, in keeping with the changes that accompany food customs and table manners. Among these customs, in which bread constitutes a major factor, are the celebration of the festival holiday and Nowruz, according to the local and ethnic culture of the various regions in Iran. Traditionally, women were required to bake the amount of bread they would consume twice a day and provide it for their families in the morning and evening. It was very common among most tribes to prepare bread that could be kept for more than one day due to unforeseen problems at that time. Bread has a festive, social, ritual, or presentational character, etc., such as: milk bread made with flour, milk, and sugar; sifted bread with sifted bran flour; hawari bread, bread without bran flour; black bread; bread without bran flour; greasy bread, whose flour is kneaded with oil; gingerbread, whose dough is mixed with fresh ginger, etc. The high nutritional value of bread has made it occupy a prominent position in ancient Iranian culture, not just as a food, but as an integral part of meals. Even in the present era, when food on tables has become more diverse than in the past, it still has a special place on the Iranian table, offered to others as part of hospitality. Other expressions related to bread are: bread and salt, or nothing kills bread, or "Oh God, there is no table without bread," or "Bread is the strength of the human body," or proverbs such as "If I do not have water, O You who have bread." (Muslim, 2017, pp. 1259-1263). People have been able to use the word "bread" in the language of the street and the market, due to its importance in economic and social life and the respect inherent in the beliefs and behaviors of people in the past and present as a blessing from God that is eaten. Among the beliefs of Iranians is that whoever cuts bread with a knife is sinful (Al-Atoum and Abdullah, 2014, 45). Some people even kiss a piece of bread and put it next to the wall or the edge so that it is not stepped on by the feet of passers-by. The sanctity of flour has reached the point that many bakery workers do not touch flour except in a state of ritual purity and cleanliness according to Islamic law.

Comparing Classic and Industrial Bread

Classic bread is hand-baked in small batches in small workshops or rural homes. Baking soda is used instead of yeast to save time and cost. Baking soda or sodium bicarbonate decomposes during the baking process, producing carbon dioxide gas, which negatively affects the digestive system. Industrial bread, on the other hand, is a type of bread that is prepared from scratch until it is packaged in bags without manual intervention. This eliminates the need for physical labor, thus eliminating the risk of disease transmission through traditional bread. The industrial bread industry has made it possible to prepare healthy and affordable bread for people with different tastes. Thanks to certain ingredients such as yeast, improvers, and dried milk, industrial bread has a longer shelf life compared to other types of bread because the dough is exposed to indirect heat, and the resulting bread has a higher nutritional value. Furthermore, bread factories can produce a wider variety of breads. Cereal flour, corn flour, barley flour, and bran are used solely to increase the nutritional value of bread. Additives such as iron and protein, as well as complete fermentation, have made industrial bread more nutritious than traditional bread. The specific way industrial bread is produced has made it possible to eliminate baking soda from the ingredients, and the leavening process in these types of bread eliminates the need for baking soda. Industrial baking is associated with higher fidelity and lower quality variations. Although classic and industrial bread share the same basic ingredients (flour and water), bread and flour experts have gone through long and turbulent periods as they attempt to improve bread quality and address issues related to subsidies, waste, and bread prices. Bakery health, baker training, and the confrontation between industrial and classic bread. With the onset of population growth, the need for food in general, and bread in particular, increased significantly. Therefore, an industrial bread production plan was launched to meet the needs of society. Speaking of disadvantages, industrial bread is not as well accepted by consumers as classical bread, and this can be attributed to the culture of the Iranian people. In other words, the Iranian people usually attach great importance to the ability to make small pieces (crumbs) of bread, and classical bread is often superior to industrial bread in this regard. Bread quality standards, from the perspective of experts and local people (Jamshidi, 2015: 3). In general, in the production of healthy and high-quality bread, high-quality wheat and multi-grain flour composition are the first factors to be taken into account. High-quality bread is characterized by four basic qualities: (shape, color, homogeneity, crust fragility), internal properties (inner texture, color), aroma (pleasant aroma), and taste (delicious and without a strong odor). If bread fails to meet any of the above quality standards, it cannot be considered high-quality bread, such as small size and internal pores. Non-uniformity, unacceptable taste, thickening or cracking of the inner tissue and marrow, dirty or burnt subsurface, non-uniform browning of the skin, non-uniform color of the inner texture, non-uniform shape and appearance, thin crust, and the presence of blisters on the crust surface indicate poor quality bread (Khajvand Abedini, 2016: 118). Healthy bread is bread made from high-quality dough. Good dough is dough made from bran flour and the appropriate proportions of salt, water, and sourdough, and does not contain any harmful additives such as baking soda. In addition to its overt and covert functions as a material element of culture, bread, whether in its classic or industrial form, can directly or indirectly influence social and cultural structures. White bread was a luxury and expensive bread, and only the rich could afford it. Control over the production and distribution of bread has been used as a means of

exerting political influence over the population for at least the past two thousand years. Arpita Mondal, A.k.: (2008). Many believe Thinkers believe that food in general, and bread in particular, should be recognized primarily as a cultural commodity, not as a means of human subsistence, which, in the age of communications, can represent the values and social norms of societies. When it comes to the relationship between bread and social and cultural structures, the residential environment, whether urban or rural, must be taken into account. Since fast food is readily available in cities and people mostly work outside their homes, people tend to consume sandwiches or foods that are often served with industrial bread. In rural areas, people mostly use traditional bread. In most rural households, women are the mainstay of food security. Bread, whether traditional or industrial, is primarily intended to satisfy a basic human need, namely the need for food. In recent years, globalization has brought both opportunities and challenges to Iranian breadmaking traditions. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, international culinary influences have seeped into Iran, resulting in a shift in preferences and consumption patterns. This has impacted traditional bread varieties in several ways, including the diversification of bread options. With increased exposure to global cuisines, Iranians have developed a wide variety of breads, including loaves and pastries in the style of the pastry shop. Westernization. This shift in consumer preferences has led to a decline in demand for some traditional bread varieties. Modern baking technologies and the emergence of industrial bakeries have facilitated the mass production of bread, often resulting in flavors and textures that overwhelm traditional artisan methods. Globalization has facilitated access to ingredients from around the world. While this may be beneficial to some aspects of Iranian cuisine, it can also lead to the use of foreign ingredients that deviate from authentic recipes. Traditional bread making. Despite the challenges posed by globalization, there are concerted efforts to preserve and promote traditional breadmaking techniques in Iran. Many individuals, organizations, and communities recognize the cultural importance of preserving this culinary heritage and passing it on to future generations. There is a growing movement to support and celebrate local bakeries that adhere to traditional methods. These bakeries are recognized for preserving the authenticity and unique flavors of their bread varieties, ensuring that traditional breadmaking techniques are not lost. Beyond its role as a staple food, bread is deeply intertwined with social customs, religious practices, and daily life. Each type of bread reflects the rich culinary heritage and regional diversity of Iran. Bread's symbolic significance as a symbol of hospitality, generosity, and unity has been passed down through generations, making it an integral part of Iranian identity.

Field Study of Mashhad City

First - Introduction to the Research Logic: Mashhad is located at latitude 36 degrees 6 minutes north and longitude 59 degrees 38 minutes east, 1,000 km from Tehran, the capital of the country, between the Koufedagh Mountains in the north and Binalud in the south, in northeastern Iran. It is the capital of Khorasan Province, the largest urban center in the eastern region of Iran, with a population of approximately 3,057,258 and an area of 351 square kilometers. It is the second largest city in Iran after Tehran. Mashhad's maximum elevation is 1,150 meters and its minimum is 950 meters. It has a variable but moderate climate, which tends to be cool and dry, with hot, dry summers and cold, humid winters. Due to the presence of the shrine of Imam Reza (peace be upon him), it is one of the most important pilgrimage

sites for Muslims, receiving more than 26 million visitors each year from all over Iran and other Islamic countries. The most important factor that has been instrumental in the formation of settlements in this region throughout history is the natural location of the Kashefrud Basin. This basin was considered the main settlement center in Khorasan throughout the post-Islamic era and even before it (Farkhad, 1392, 29). The urban development and population growth of Mashhad witnessed a coordinated and balanced increase until a few decades ago. However, with development, changes occurred in the city, manifested in rapid population growth and intense physical expansion, resulting in uneven growth. As the first religious city in Iran, this city has enjoyed a special status in terms of size, population, geographical scope, and administration, as it is one of the country's tourist destinations. Mashhad includes thirteen municipal districts, while eleven percent of its area consists of the city's suburbs. According to studies conducted in the city, eight main districts are known. These districts include 42 neighborhoods, as shown in the map below (Fakhrian et al., 1392, p. 3).

Map of the holy city of Mashhad in Iran



Types of Bread in the Holy City of Mashhad:

There are several types of bread in Iran, each offering its own distinct flavors and textures, as follows: (Karizaki, 2017, 4-5)

- Barbari: A dry, thin, flat bread, approximately 70 cm long and 30 cm wide. It is baked plain or with sesame seeds.
- Sangak: Flatbread baked with a small stone. It is a rectangular whole-wheat bread. Some bakeries add various toppings, such as sesame seeds, dried herbs, and caraway seeds.
- Taftoon: Used by people for centuries, the traditional method was baking in a clay oven called a tandoor. Taftoons are usually round, about 12 to 15 inches in diameter. Their circular shape enhances the bread's beauty and appeal.
- Lavash: Round lavash bread is the thinnest of the various types of bread found in Mashhad.
- Noon Qandi, Persian Sweet Bread: This delicious bread holds a special place in Persian cuisine and culture. Its name, Qandi, is derived from the Persian word "qand," meaning sugar, highlighting its sweet nature (Najafi, 1397, p. 81). This traditional bread has been treasured for generations, and its preparation and consumption are based on rich cultural customs and celebrations during special occasions and festive gatherings. For example, Nowruz, the Persian New Year, typically takes place on the vernal equinox. Families gather to celebrate the new year and the arrival of spring. This sweet bread is a part of widespread holidays and festivals, including weddings and engagements, symbolizing sweetness and prosperity

for the newlyweds. Bread is also an essential element in various joyful celebrations, and its cultural significance makes it a cherished treat that brings people together during happy occasions (Pezeshki, 2018, p. 49). It not only satisfies the taste buds but also serves as a reminder of the rich traditions and customs passed down through generations in Iran.

Contents of the Bread Museum in the Holy City of Mashhad

The Bread Museum in the Holy City of Mashhad was established in the last decade, in 2013, with the aim of enhancing public awareness of the history and culture of bread in Iran. As a cultural and historical center, it occupies a special place among cultural museums in Iran. The museum provides a space for visitors to learn about various aspects of the history, types, and methods of breadmaking in Iran, given its special focus on bread as one of the most important components of the Iranian diet. By displaying these cultural and historical aspects of bread, the Bread Museum in Mashhad helps visitors establish a deeper connection with their culture and traditions and serves as an educational resource for students and researchers investigating Iranian history and culture. For this reason, the Mashhad Bread Museum was designed and constructed to promote the culture of using traditional bread and introduce the younger generation to bread production. It showcases all the steps, from sowing seeds, Chinese wheat, and bread-making tools such as dastas, water mills, windmills, ovens, and meshbaks. It also showcases the opera dance, a ritual of Khorasan that is in line with the agricultural beliefs of the region's people, and is enjoyed in an agricultural field with several mannequins. The farmland and local and rural homes are also displayed. In the water area, various traditional methods of producing wheat flour are beautifully designed and displayed, including water mills, windmills (aspad), dastas, and more. In the fire and oven area, various traditional cooking methods, such as stone baking, standing ovens, earth ovens, and teak wood, are modeled using models wearing traditional clothing. The space and architecture of this museum were designed in the traditional Iranian style, using the simplest materials (Iranian bricks, straw, wood, and plaster) to create formal shapes and ceramic knots. According to the dimensions of the hall (20.5 x 27.27 meters), the 27-meter space was converted into four spaces, respectively: the museum entrance space, the soil space, the water space, the fire space, and a section designed for the bread photo exhibition. In the soil space, there was a reference to the three agricultural stages, and the wheat harvest was displayed in an agricultural field with several mannequins and small-scale agricultural equipment. The breads in this museum are sang, barbari bread, wheat germ bread, white bread, brown bread, lavash bread, oil bread, shermal bread, whole grain tandoori bread, sangak, and all types of local Iranian bread from sangak and clay oven bread. The most important exhibits and contents of the museum for tourists and visitors are as follows:

- The Agricultural Kiosk: All the steps farmers take, from planting seeds and harvesting wheat on agricultural land to preparing bread flour, are displayed.
- The Mill: This section consists of hand mills and windmills (asbad). The mill section displays the work of men and women who turn wheat grains into flour using a hand mill, evoking the past in this space.
- Fire: The fire kiosk represents the final stage of bread preparation, featuring various types of ovens, including

clay ovens, teak ovens, stone ovens, mold ovens, nomadic ovens, and standing ovens.

- Opera Dance: The opera dance section, called Afar, is the most attractive part of the museum. The opera dance is associated with the Parthian period in southern Khorasan Province, such as Gonabad, Khaf, and Taybad. The dance reflects people's beliefs during planting and harvesting. This dance consists of eighteen main movements and eight side movements. The marginal movements include sowing, guarding the fields, reaping, praying for rain, and making bread. In the final stage, people pray for gratitude and happiness for the harvest.

Museum Sections:

The Mashhad Holy Bread Museum consists of several sections, each of which addresses the history and culture of bread in Iran:

- Historical Section: The historical section of the Mashhad Bread Museum is one of the most interesting and important sections of the museum, which studies and displays the history of bread in Iran. This section beautifully attempts to demonstrate the profound relationship between bread and Iranian culture. As one of the oldest and most important foodstuffs in human history, bread holds a special place in Iranian culture, and this food item has always been very important in the daily lives of Iranians, not only in terms of nutrition but also as a cultural and social symbol. Through the display of a collection of ancient documents, photos, and objects, this section showcases traditional methods of bread making: Visitors can learn about a variety of bread-making processes, including dough preparation, various baking methods, and the traditional tools used in the process. This exhibition allows visitors to gain a tangible and accurate experience of bread-making in Iran's distant past.
- C- Educational and Cultural Significance: In addition to its historical value, the Mashhadi Bread Museum has important educational aspects as a rich resource for students, researchers, and those interested in Iranian history and culture. Through the documentation and displays in this section, visitors can gain a deeper understanding of the role of bread in Iranian history and culture.
- The Role of Bread in Iranian Customs and Traditions: Bread plays an important role in many traditional celebrations in Iran, such as weddings, mourning, and national and religious celebrations. Bread is considered a symbol of blessing and pride. The museum presents these roles through the display of photos, videos, and related objects. Displaying types of bread baked only during special celebrations allows visitors to learn about the history and significance of these breads in different cultural contexts. This is in addition to the social and cultural interactions that bread creates in creating social bonds and strengthening solidarity within society.
- Educational Aspect: Visitors have the opportunity to learn about the process of preparing and baking various types of traditional and modern Iranian bread through demonstrations, workshops, and training courses that allow enthusiasts to gain practical experience in kneading, shaping, and baking bread. This hands-on experience is particularly appealing to children and

young people, allowing them to learn about various aspects of bread culture in a direct and interactive way. This allows them to preserve traditional bread-baking knowledge and skills as a bridge between the past and the present, ensuring that traditional bread-baking knowledge and skills are not forgotten and are passed on to future generations.

- Museum Atmosphere: Upon entering the museum, visitors are greeted by the aroma of bread and the buzz of history and culture. Its interior design, inspired by traditional Iranian architecture, creates an inviting atmosphere that encourages visitors to browse the various exhibits, participate in workshops, and gain firsthand experience of bread-baking. This opportunity is both educational and enjoyable, especially for children and young people, and is a valuable interactive experience for those interested in Iranian history, culture, and traditional arts.

Conclusion

The Mashhad Bread Museum is not only an exhibition center showcasing all kinds of Iranian bread, but it is also a profound cultural center, promoting knowledge and values related to breadmaking and its place in Iranian culture. By offering a comprehensive overview of the history and culture of bread, this museum provides a rich and lasting experience for visitors, allowing them to connect with an important part of their cultural identity.

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Pictures of the Bread Museum in the holy city of Mashhad



A photo of the authors during a field visit to the museum.

