

## On the tools: Breadmakers

Welcome to Good Taste's new monthly column. Our test kitchen tries a budget and a high-end gadget each month to see which is the best. For the inaugural week, Kylie Martin tries two breadmakers...

### The challengers



John Lewis  
CBK150JLU  
Bread Maker.  
£69.95,  
www.john  
lewis.co.uk

VS



Panasonic  
SD-2501W.  
£139.99,  
www.  
panasonic.  
co.uk

### The recipe

Leiths sundried tomato bread from Leiths Baking Bible (Bloomsbury, £35): **2¼tsp fast-action yeast, 2tsp caster sugar, 200ml lukewarm water, 340g strong white flour, 1tsp salt, 2tbsp sundried tomato oil, 55g sundried tomatoes cut into ½cm pieces.** Bake according to bread maker's instructions.

### The contest

Within 20 minutes of the Panasonic arriving I have a loaf on the go, thanks to its simple manual that includes a selection of recipes. I select a white bread programme with a dark crust and adapt Leiths' recipe to Panasonic's instructions. A light tells me which stage the bread is at and the resulting crusty

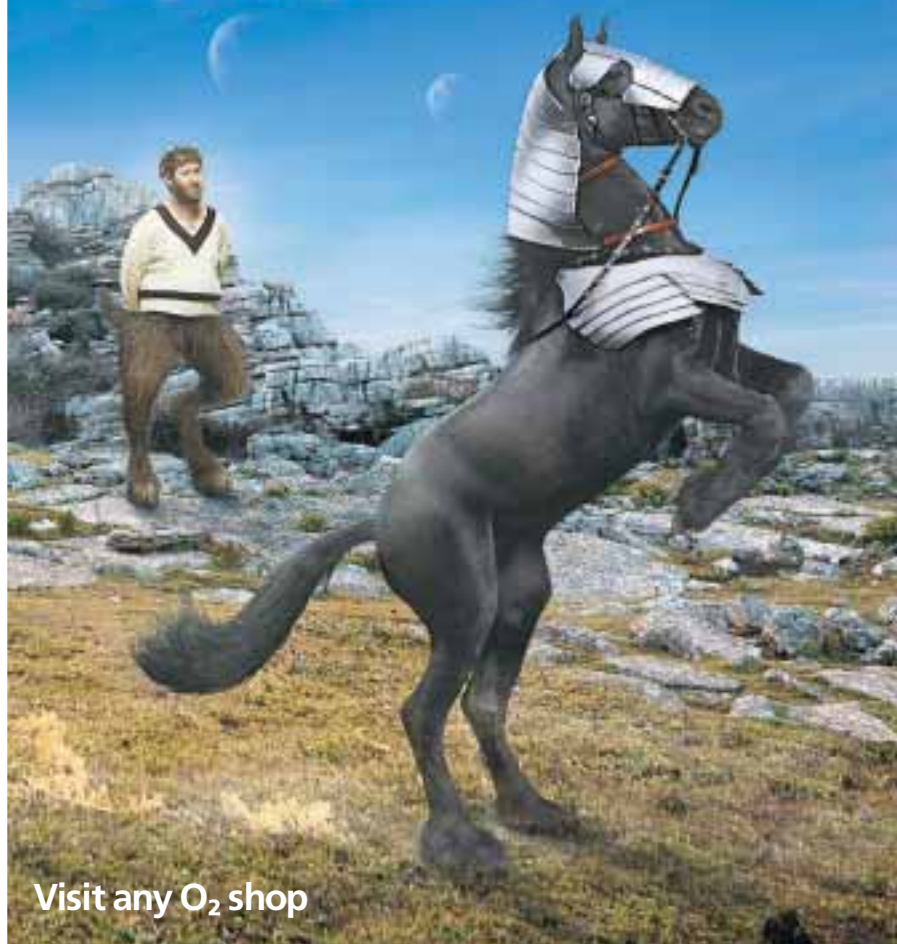
orange-flecked loaf has an airy texture. The John Lewis machine feels less durable. It's also easy to use but is much noisier and doesn't come with recipes. Its pan is more cube-shaped but the bread is lovely and equals the Panasonic loaf.

### The scores

The Panasonic has more bread options, including rye and gluten-free, a nut dispenser and three loaf sizes. The John Lewis machine has a handy viewing window and two loaf sizes. Both have 13-hour timers, jam making and crust selectors. But Panasonic gets top marks for its good looks, super recipe book and ease of use. *Email goodtaste@ukmetro.co.uk if you have any ideas for future cooking gizmo contests.*

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## Good Taste

Edited by Chloe Scott goodtaste@ukmetro.co.uk

# A stellar idea



For those who love smallholdings and la dolce vita, this gourmet stop-off I'm at has to be one of the most idyllic spots in Europe. In the undulating hills here in Tuscany, the Lo Franco family run a green nirvana. Their farm, La Vialla, is biodynamic – this is where you farm using the planetary cycles. It's popular now, from the National Trust growing flowers by the lunar calendar to Marks & Spencer serving its vinos to critics on 'Moon days'. But the family here started using this practice in 1978, way before it became trendy.

Additionally, the place is environmental with a capital E: the grain for the flour is ground not with electricity but two vintage stone mills. In the room next door, cooks rustle up cantucci (biscuits) still sticky with almonds, eggs, flour and yeast.

For anyone staying in the cottages, the refuse is sorted into composting compartments. The electricity is solar panelled. And the olives' leftovers become fertiliser. The sheep too are indispensable

**New age farming:**  
A pesticide-free farm in Tuscany using groundbreaking techniques is tickling foodies' palates. Could this be the future of food? **BY CHLOE SCOTT**

for manure, while also producing delicate ivory pecorino cheese.

I've popped in on my hols to see it in action because their ingredients are now available in Britain. The three dapper brothers who run this estate (their father, Piero, and mother, Giuliana, founded it wanting the children to eat comestibles without fertilisers) are well established in Italy. For example, Bandino, the youngest, is an olive oil connoisseur and an official taster for the region. German and Dutch devotees make pilgrimages here with almost religious zeal. For Britain, where La Vialla is lesser known, it is the ingredients that sing for themselves.

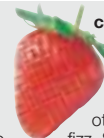
### Try La Vialla's fragolino apéritif

Giuliana's fragolino (serves 6)

■ Cut 300g ripe strawberries and wash 6 large strawberries (decor for the glasses). Add 2tbsp cane sugar to the chopped ones and

1tsp lemon juice. Mix. Cover and leave in the fridge for one hour.

■ Purée the strawberries. Pour into the bottom of a large carafe. Add 1 bottle of



chilled sparkling wine (ideally spumante). Stir with a long spoon without agitating too much, otherwise it will lose its fizz. Serve immediately in flutes. Decorate each glass with one large strawberry.





**Bompas & Parr launches its Buck House jelly moulds at Selfridges on April 26 in time for the royal wedding** £12.95 each. [www.selfridges.com](http://www.selfridges.com)

# for eco food



**Homely:** (clockwise from left) Create the perfect cantucci; bread and wine from La Vialla; jars of delicious produce; Bandino, Gianni and Antonio Lo Franco

Up a rickety track, we visit La Lignana, their olive mill – past the 1,067 solar panels, rustling up 150kw an hour. The family has its own press. ‘We pick olives and put them in the press on the same day,’ says Nicole Vermeulen, one of the workers, pointing to the two primordial looking granite stones. ‘This makes a huge difference as they don’t oxidise.’

Most places press two to three times but not La Lignana. ‘There is no second pressing,’ says Vermeulen with pride.

Their wine-growing techniques are also rare. Yes, from pinot nero to sangiovese, they’re growing conventional grapes but, with the help of a Florence University professor, they’re reviving nearly extinct species. Middle brother Antonio, who trained as a sommelier, explains: ‘There are only four clones of sangiovese; 50 years ago there were 20. We’re working to produce 120 different vine varieties, which are going to be lost. Maybe we’ll even discover some new wine.’

Vin Santo is, of course, key here and award winning. Cantucci dipped into the sweet blushing pink wine is an obligatory ritual. The trebbiano and malvasia grapes are dried slowly for two months before being put immediately in beautiful caratelli – not steel barrels.

Indeed, it’s harvest on my visit. Tourists (all wolfish, discerning food lovers) dine with the family, among the vines. The scene swims with more bonhomie than a rosy-hued Dolmio advert. Today, I’ve tried pesto – not vinegary smudge but whole pine nuts pushing through a bed of basil; leggy linguine with texture; home-grown

olive oil from a mix of morelline, le leccine (black olives) and the frantoiane and le raggiaie (green). This is alongside spumante – a dry bubbly.

I leave having stocked up on jars of pomodoro, olive oil, Arancia and aged pecorino; it all tastes ambrosial. Why? Antonio believes it’s because the soil is so rich in organisms here. ‘The animals, vegetables, forest and Moon are all one organism. Everything is alive,’ he says.

Compared to conventional farming, where the soil is utterly barren and oil prices unsustainable, the approach is certainly pioneering.

*La Vialla delivers to the home only; it doesn’t charge delivery costs but ask, if possible, to combine orders to limit costs and avoid waste. Email [fattoria@lavialla.it](mailto:fattoria@lavialla.it) for the product book. [www.lavialla.it](http://www.lavialla.it)*

## Essential read

**Tuscany is a new cookbook that’s perfect for the insatiable Italophile. It has 50 recipes weaving through the regions of Siena to Pisa. Trippa (tripe) has its own section with a multiple-stomach recipe from Florence. And there are pages covering places such as the chocolate valley, ‘a quiet revolution taking place behind closed doors’. The blessed pomodoro is not forgotten, nor is cantucci.**

*Tuscany is published by Phaidon and priced £24.95.*



## For chocolate profligacy, check these out...

Open the egg box and you’ll discover six cheeky chicks peeking out.

£17 for a box of six 80s Rock Chicks. [www.demarquette.com](http://www.demarquette.com)



Artisan du chocolat’s Gerard Coleman is a cocoa messiah. Most enticing this year are his carrot bags overflowing with small eggs of mint, praline and caramel fillings, to name a few.

£5.50. [www.artisanduchocolat.com](http://www.artisanduchocolat.com)  
[www.selfridges.com](http://www.selfridges.com)



This flamboyantly dressed sable biscuit was fabulously messy to eat, with its decadent rhubarb and strawberry compote and whipped white chocolate ganache. The base was beguiling buttery crunchiness.

*La Surprise de Pâques*, £17 for six to eight portions. [www.maisonblanc.com](http://www.maisonblanc.com)



And finally, abstain from the farinaceous hot cross bun for the Borsari Columba Classica, the dove-shaped Italian morsel. £3.59 for 100g. Waitrose. Tel: 0800 188 884.



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