

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: CHN35188
Country: China
Date: 17 July 2009

Keywords: China – CHN35188 – Catholic Altar Bread

This response was prepared by the Research & Information Services Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. This research response may not, under any circumstance, be cited in a decision or any other document. Anyone wishing to use this information may only cite the primary source material contained herein.

Questions

1. **Could you please provide information as to how Catholic communion bread is made?**
2. **Is there any information relating to arrests of people for manufacturing communion bread?**
3. Deleted.
4. Deleted.
5. Deleted.
6. Deleted.

RESPONSE

1. **Could you please provide information as to how Catholic communion bread is made?**

Available information indicates that Catholic communion also know as altar bread should be made from flour and water only. Sources indicate that no other ingredients should be added and that the altar bread should be unleavened. Reports were located in the sources consulted regarding the processes undertaken to produce altar bread in two American companies. The reports indicate that the companies mix the flour and water and then bake the mixture in specially designed ovens. After being baked the bread is softened in a humidity room and then cut into round hosts. The altar bread is then packaged for distribution (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacrament of the Holy See, 2004, 'Instruction, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist', The official website of the Holy See, 25 March http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_2004_0423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html#chapter%20iii- Accessed 13 July 2009 – Attachment 1; The Holy See 2003, 'General Instruction of the Roman Missal, *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, Including Adaptations for the Dioceses of the United States of America', The official website of the Holy See, 17 March

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20030317_ordinamento-messale_en.html – Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 2; ‘Altar Breads’ (undated), New Advent website <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01349d.htm> – Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 3; ‘Breaded bliss’ 2008, *The Boston Globe*, 30 November http://www.boston.com/news/local/rhode_island/articles/2008/11/30/breaded_bliss/?page=full – Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 4; Lucero, S. 2006 ‘Host-baking Cistercians mix life in cloister with modern operation’, *Catholic Online*, 30 August http://www.catholic.org/diocese/diocese_story.php?id=21002- Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 5).

The official website for the Vatican contains information regarding the correct altar bread to be used for the celebration of the Catholic Eucharist. The report states that the bread “must be unleavened, purely of wheat, and recently made so that there is no danger of decomposition”. The website states that “it is a grave abuse to introduce other substances, such as fruit or sugar or honey, into the bread for confecting the Eucharist”. The report states that while some of the altar bread, also known as the ‘host’, should be made in a manner able to be broken and distributed to some members during mass, smaller ‘hosts’ are also allowable for large congregations. The report contains the following relevant information:

The Matter of the Most Holy Eucharist

[48] The bread used in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharistic Sacrifice must be unleavened, purely of wheat, and recently made so that there is no danger of decomposition. It follows therefore that bread made from another substance, even if it is grain, or if it is mixed with another substance different from wheat to such an extent that it would not commonly be considered wheat bread, does not constitute valid matter for confecting the Sacrifice and the Eucharistic Sacrament. It is a grave abuse to introduce other substances, such as fruit or sugar or honey, into the bread for confecting the Eucharist. Hosts should obviously be made by those who are not only distinguished by their integrity, but also skilled in making them and furnished with suitable tools.

[49] By reason of the sign, it is appropriate that at least some parts of the Eucharistic Bread coming from the fraction should be distributed to at least some of the faithful in Communion. “Small hosts are, however, in no way ruled out when the number of those receiving Holy Communion or other pastoral needs require it”, and indeed small hosts requiring no further fraction ought customarily to be used for the most part.

... This Instruction, prepared by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments by mandate of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II in collaboration with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, was approved by the same Pontiff on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, 19 March 2004, and he ordered it to be published and to be observed immediately by all concerned (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacrament of the Holy See 2004, ‘Instruction, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist’, The official website of the Holy See, 25 March http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html#Chapter%20III- Accessed 13 July 2009 – Attachment 1).

A 2002 instructional document by the Holy See, which has been translated and adapted for the American diocese of the Catholic Church, provides similar information on the requirements for the bread to be used for the Catholic Eucharist. The report states that the bread used for the Eucharist must be unleavened, made from wheat only and be “recently baked”. The document also states that the some of the altar bread must be made so that it can be broken by the priest during mass for the purpose of distributing it to some congregation

members, but that small hosts can be used for large congregations. The document contains the following information:

320. The bread for celebrating the Eucharist must be made only from wheat, must be recently baked, and, according to the ancient tradition of the Latin Church, must be unleavened.

321. The meaning of the sign demands that the material for the Eucharistic celebration truly have the appearance of food. It is therefore expedient that the Eucharistic bread, even though unleavened and baked in the traditional shape, be made in such a way that the priest at Mass with a congregation is able in practice to break it into parts for distribution to at least some of the faithful. Small hosts are, however, in no way ruled out when the number of those receiving Holy Communion or other pastoral needs require it. The action of the fraction or breaking of bread, which gave its name to the Eucharist in apostolic times, will bring out more clearly the force and importance of the sign of unity of all in the one bread, and of the sign of charity by the fact that the one bread is distributed among the brothers and sisters.

...323. Diligent care should be taken to ensure that the bread and wine intended for the Eucharist are kept in a perfect state of conservation: that is, that the wine does not turn to vinegar nor the bread spoil or become too hard to be broken easily (The Holy See 2003, 'General Instruction of the Roman Missal, *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, Including Adaptations for the Dioceses of the United States of America', The official website of the Holy See, 17 March

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20030317_ordinamento-messale_en.html – Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 2).

A 2005 publication by the Holy See, titled the *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* includes information as to what the Eucharist is, why and how it was instituted and how it is currently celebrated. Please see chapters 271 to 294 of the report for information on the “sacrament of the Eucharist” (*Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2005, The official website of the Holy See, 28 June

http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html#motu%20proprio – Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 6).

A Catholic encyclopaedia on the New Advent website contains information on the requirements for altar bread. The website states that altar bread must be made from wheat, natural water (not distilled water), “baked in an oven”, not “corrupted”, “recently made” and “clean and fair, of a thin layer, and of a size conformable to the regular custom in the Latin Church”. The online encyclopaedia also states that altar bread must be unleavened in the Western church but may be leavened in the Eastern Church. (Please note that according to information from the Catholic encyclopaedia the terms ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ churches refer to a political division which occurred within the Church during the Roman Empire. Western churches include those that “gravitate around Rome” and Eastern churches are defined as those that originally depended on the “Eastern Empire at Constantinople”). The Catholic encyclopaedia provides the following information on altar bread:

For valid consecration the hosts must be:

- made of wheaten flour,
- mixed with pure natural water,
- baked in an oven, **or between two heated iron moulds**, and
- they must not be corrupted (Miss. Rom., De Defectibus, III, 1).

If the host is not made of wheaten flour, or is mixed with flour of another kind in such quantity that it cannot be called wheat bread, it may not be used (*ibid.*). If not natural but distilled water is used, the consecration becomes of doubtful validity (*ibid.*, 2). If the host begins to be corrupt, it would be a grievous offence to use it, but it is considered valid matter (*ibid.*, 3.) For *licit* consecration:

- the bread must be, at present unleavened in the Western Church, but leavened bread in the Eastern Church, except among the Maronites, the Armenians, and in the Churches of Jerusalem and Alexandria, where it is unleavened.
- ...The hosts must be recently made (Rit. Rom., tit. iv, cap. i, n. 7). The rubrics do not specify the term *recentes* in speaking of the hosts. In Rome, the bakers of altar-breads are obliged to make solemn affidavit that they will not sell breads older than fifteen days, and St. Charles, by a statute of the Fourth Synod of Milan, prescribed that hosts older than twenty days must not be used in the celebration of Mass. In practice, therefore, those older than three weeks ought not to be used.
- Round in form, and not broken.
- Clean and fair, of a thin layer, and of a size conformable to the regular custom in the Latin Church. In Rome the large hosts are about three and one-fifth inches in diameter; in other places they are smaller, but should be at least two and three-fourths inches in diameter. The small hosts for the Communion of the laity should be about one and two-fifths inches in diameter (Schober, S. Alphonsi Liber de Caeremoniis Missae, p. 6, footnote 9). When a large host can not be obtained Mass may be said in private with a small host. In cases of necessity, such as permitting the people to fulfil the precept of hearing Mass, or administering Viaticum, the Mass may be also said with a small host but, as liturgists say, to avoid scandal the faithful should be advised.

As a rule the image of Christ crucified should be impressed on the large host (Cong. Sac. Rit., 6 April, 1834), but the monogram of the Holy Name (Ephem. Lit., XIII, 1899, p. 686), or the Sacred Heart (*ibid.*, p. 266) may also be adopted ('Altar Breads' (undated), New Advent website <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01349d.htm> – Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 3; For information on Western and Eastern Churches see: 'Eastern Churches' (undated), New Advent website <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05230a.htm> – Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 8).

On 30 November 2008, *The Boston Globe* reported on the operation of Cavanagh Co, an American company which is the leading supplier of Communion wafers for America, Canada and Australia. The report states that according to the company the communion wafers are made of only wheat flour and water. The report states that "the Catholic Church forbids leavening agents, such as yeast or oil". The report also contains a description of the machines and processes used to create the communion wafers. According to the report Communion wafers are baked in a motorised oven which presses the mixture flat like a waffle iron. The Communion wafers are then steamed, cut and imprinted at the same time and are packaged for distribution. The article provides the following information:

In its 62d year of operation, the Cavanagh family business is the nation's leading supplier of Communion wafers.

...Before the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s, Communion wafers were shiny white, much thinner than they are now, and designed to dissolve on the tongue, the Cavanaghs explained. The Church now celebrates the Eucharist with wafers that more closely resembled bread, and the Cavanagh Co. patented techniques to produce thicker unleavened wafers with sealed edges to prevent crumbs, the Cavanaghs said.

The family boasts of an 80 percent market share in the United States, and similar or even greater percentages in Canada, England, and Australia. With those kinds of numbers, the Cavanagh Co. is the Microsoft of altar bread.

...Communion wafers taste plain because there isn't much in them – just wheat flour and water. The Catholic Church forbids leavening agents, such as yeast or oil. The bread is made in “the ultimate waffle iron,” said Luke.

The company's massive, motorized oven consists of a series of interlocking metal plates that move like a giant bulldozer tread. About every two seconds, nozzles spray batter on one of the passing plates. The batter is pressed flat, as in a waffle iron, then travels a 31-second baking cycle at 250 degrees.

The rectangular sheets of finished bread are tan and ragged around the edges, like old parchment paper. At this stage the bread is crunchy and brittle.

A conveyor belt whisks the baked sheets into a steam room. Humidity makes the bread easier to cut without crumbling.

Next comes the die cutter. Sheets of bread automatically drop between two rollers, which cut 112 standard Communion wafers from each sheet in about one second, while simultaneously indenting a cross or a lamb shape into each wafer.

...Finished wafers ride conveyers into the “columnizer,” a packaging machine custom-built by Peter Cavanagh. The 12-foot machine, draped with tubes and wires, has one job sealing columns of wafers in 100-count cellophane packages, like tubes of tiny Ritz crackers

(‘Breaded bliss’ 2008, *The Boston Globe*, 30 November

http://www.boston.com/news/local/rhode_island/articles/2008/11/30/breaded_bliss/?page=full – Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 4).

On 25 December 2008, *The New York Times* also reported on the Cavanagh Company. The report states that Catholic Communion bread is unleavened and contains only flour and water. The report also states that there are different varieties of Communion bread which can be made with white or wheat flour, of various sizes and thicknesses and with different imprints (Zezima, K. 2008, ‘Bread of Life, Baked in Rhode Island’, *The New York Times*, 25 December http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/25/business/smallbusiness/25sbiz.html?_r=2 – Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 7).

A 2006 report by *The Catholic Herald* reports on a monastery in America in which the nuns produce altar bread. The report states that the nuns mix the flour and water and then bake the mixture in a “computerised baker, manufactured as a cookie wafer machine”. The oven produces thin sheets of bread which are then put into a steam room. Once softened the bread is cut into round hosts and packaged for distribution. The report provides the following information on the procedures undertaken in the preparation of altar bread:

To sustain their livelihood, the nuns bake altar bread. Their modern bread-baking operation seems out of place in a Cistercian monastery, whose roots go back to 1098.

The process begins with flour and water measured and mixed into a commercial mixer, blending gallons of altar bread batter. It is then pumped through a hose attached to a pipe and poured into an oven, where 30 heated irons bake the bread and move it along a conveyor belt. The oven is about 15 feet long and each baking iron is heated to about 325 degrees.

The computerized baker, manufactured as a cookie wafer machine and imported from Austria, produces about 6,000 11-by-15-inch sheets of whole wheat or white bread in about six hours. The nuns bake one day a week and cut and package the other five days. A workday is from about 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with breaks for prayer and meals.

The process, which involves 10 nuns doing various tasks, produces more than 12 million altar breads each year.

After the thin sheets of altar bread are removed from the oven, they must be softened. They are placed on racks and moved to a special room where a warm fog penetrates and softens the bread.

Following this dampening process, the sheets are stacked several inches high and placed on a bread cutter that resembles a drill press. The bread is cut into round hosts of three different sizes and then inspected for imperfections.

The wafers are gathered and placed upright on a half-tube rack in batches of 100. These racks are loaded onto another machine that packages the wafers in rolls of airtight cellophane tubes, ready for packaging into cardboard shipping boxes and transporting to more than 400 parishes around the United States (Lucero, S. 2006 'Host-baking Cistercians mix life in cloister with modern operation', *Catholic Online*, 30 August http://www.catholic.org/diocese/diocese_story.php?id=21002- Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 5).

Sources indicate that the Vatican requires Catholic altar bread to contain some gluten. A 2004 report on by the Catholic Celiac Society states that "canon law requires that the altar bread used during the Eucharist be made of wheat and water. The Vatican has further ruled that altar bread must contain enough gluten to attain the "confection of bread". A 2004 article by *The Catholic Key*, also states that "the Vatican requires that Communion hosts contain some gluten". The articles report however, that a convent in America has successfully created altar bread with a gluten content of 0.01 per cent which has been approved by the Vatican ('Celiac Disease: The Invisible Disability' 2004, Catholic Celiac Society website <http://www.catholicceliacs.org/CatholicCeliacOverview.pdf> – Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 9; Libonati, J & Madden, D. 2004 'Benedictine nuns discover way to produce low-gluten Communion hosts', *The Catholic Key*, 9 April http://www.catholickey.org/index.php3?gif=news.gif&mode=view&issue=20040409&article_id=2858 – Accessed 15 July 2009 – Attachment 10).

2. Is there any information relating to arrests of people for manufacturing communion bread?

No information was found in the sources consulted regarding the arrest of individuals for manufacturing communion or altar bread in China. Similarly, no information was found in the sources consulted regarding the manufacturing of communion or altar bread in China.

3. Deleted.

4. Deleted.

5. Deleted.

6. Deleted.

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources:

Government Information & Reports

Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

US Department of State website <http://www.state.gov>

United Nations (UN)

UNHCR <http://www.unhcr.ch/>

Non-Government Organisations

Amnesty International website <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Catholic Celiac Society website <http://www.catholicceliacs.org/>

Catholic Online <http://www.catholic.org/>

Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights <http://www.ihf-hr.org/welcome.php>

Human Rights Internet (HRI) website <http://www.hri.ca>

New Advent website <http://www.newadvent.org/>

The official website of the Holy See <http://www.vatican.va/>

International News & Politics

BBC News website <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

The Boston Globe <http://www.boston.com/>

Region Specific Links

Asia News <http://www.asianews.it/>

Search Engines

Google search engine <http://www.google.com.au/>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacrament of the Holy See, 2004, 'Instruction, *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist', The official website of the Holy See, 25 March
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20040423_redemptionis-sacramentum_en.html#Chapter%20III- Accessed 13 July 2009.

2. The Holy See 2003, 'General Instruction of the Roman Missal, *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, Including Adaptations for the Dioceses of the United States of America', The official website of the Holy See, 17 March
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccdds/documents/rc_con_ccdds_doc_20030317_ordinamento-messale_en.html – Accessed 15 July 2009.
3. 'Altar Breads' (undated), New Advent website
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01349d.htm> – Accessed 15 July 2009.
4. 'Breaded bliss' 2008, *The Boston Globe*, 30 November
http://www.boston.com/news/local/rhode_island/articles/2008/11/30/breaded_bliss/?page=full – Accessed 15 July 2009.
5. Lucero, S. 2006 'Host-baking Cistercians mix life in cloister with modern operation', *Catholic Online*, 30 August
http://www.catholic.org/diocese/diocese_story.php?id=21002- Accessed 15 July 2009.
6. *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2005, The official website of the Holy See, 28 June
http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html#motu%20proprio – Accessed 15 July 2009.
7. Zezima, K. 2008, 'Bread of Life, Baked in Rhode Island', *The New York Times*, 25 December
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/25/business/smallbusiness/25sbiz.html?_r=2 – Accessed 15 July 2009.
8. 'Eastern Churches' (undated), New Advent website
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05230a.htm> – Accessed 15 July 2009.
9. 'Celiac Disease: The Invisible Disability' 2004, Catholic Celiac Society website
<http://www.catholicceliacs.org/CatholicCeliacOverview.pdf> – Accessed 15 July 2009.
10. Libonati, J & Madden, D. 2004 'Benedictine nuns discover way to produce low-gluten Communion hosts', *The Catholic Key*, 9 April
http://www.catholickey.org/index.php3?gif=news.gif&mode=view&issue=20040409&article_id=2858 – Accessed 15 July 2009.
11. Deleted.
12. Deleted.
13. Deleted.
14. Deleted.
15. Deleted.
16. Deleted.