

COMMUNAL OVEN

Bread has always been a staple of the French diet, in the same way as pasta for Italians and rice for the Chinese.



Photo J.Collaudin

Up until the French Revolution bread was baked in communal ovens. Four = oven, banal = common, (with the same origin as the English word.) The feudal lord, the 'seigneur', had a duty to build and make available to his subjects, facilities such as bread ovens. The villagers were obliged to use these facilities and pay a fee to the lord for using them. Both the building and the fee were called a 'banalité'. If the inhabitants did not use this oven they were subject to a fine known as a 'ban'. At the end of the Middle Ages the ovens were leased to individuals or a group of the inhabitants. Additionally, if the bread thus baked was sold outside of the commune, the buyer usually had to pay a fine.

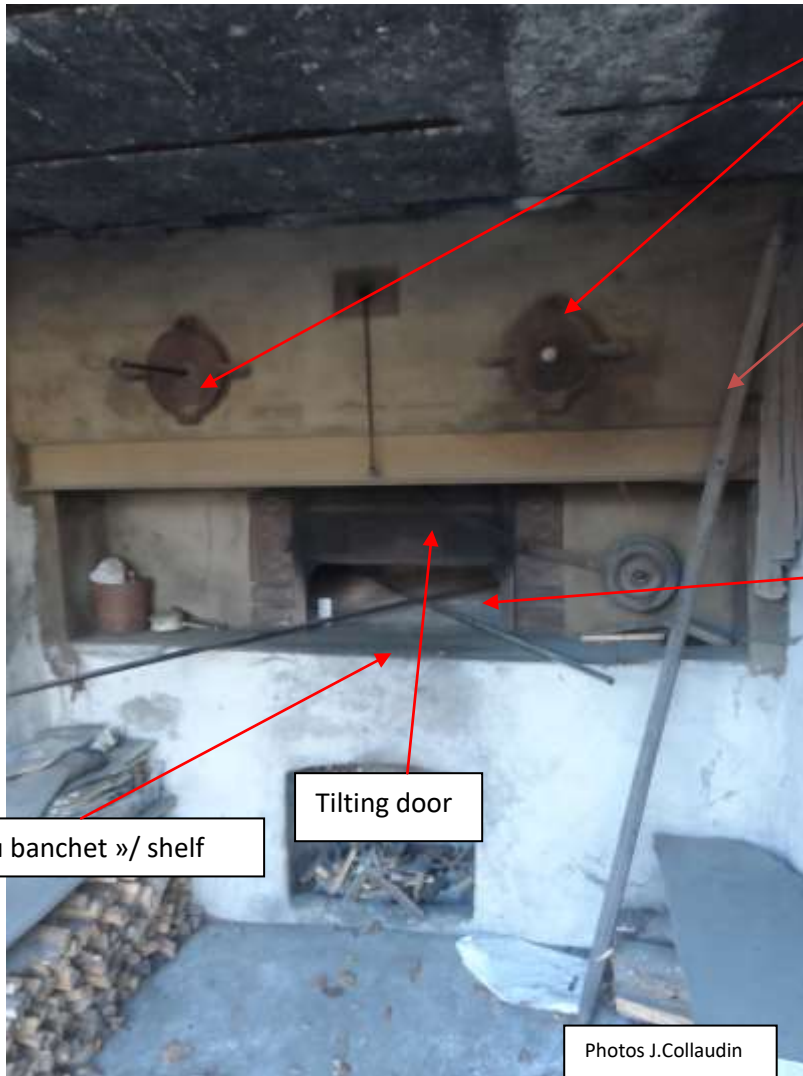
After the Revolution these ovens were managed by the village council, the 'commune'. The communal ovens were places where bread was baked but also where villagers met together and exchanged gossip, as were the wash house and the water sources...

History of Tresserve's communal ovens

18 mars 1829 : « Les habitations dont se compose cette commune de Tresserve sont presque toutes réunies sur trois points qui forment autant de quartiers : l'un au midi, l'autre au centre et l'autre au nord. Il existe dans l'un des deux premiers un four banal désigné dans la mappe comme propriété communale et affecté à leur usage particulier. Mauvais état. Réparation à leurs frais. Au centre reconstruction d'un édifice public sur un sol appartenant à la commune »

18 March 1829: " The dwellings which constitute this commune of Tresserve are almost all concentrate at three points; one in the south, one in the centre and another to the north. There exists in one of the first two a communal oven marked on the map as being in communal ownership and for their sole usage. Poor condition. Repairs at their cost. in the centre reconstruction of a public building on land belonging to the commune." Extract from village archives

Construction of north communal oven



Controls for the « Ouras » (air vents)

« Pana » for cleaning the hearth (a cloth attached to a pole)

« Oura » (aération du four)

« Sole »hearth
Floor of oven

Dome

« Autel ou banchet »/ shelf

Tilting door

Photos J.Collaudin



Construction materials used:

Until the end of 19th century ovens, like dwelling houses, were built from locally available materials.

In Savoy a sandstone known as 'molasse' was used for window and door frames (as can be seen today in the Mairie). This material was extracted from the quarries of Forézan at Cognin and Vars in Chindrieux. It is a soft sandstone which also has refractory properties (it retains its strength at high temperatures) which accounts for its use in the building of chimneys and, naturally, bread ovens. Molasse hardens when in contact with fire. Around the shores of Lake Bourget, most ovens were built this way. Since the stone is very fragile it required frequent repair. Today there are only a few oven surviving. In Savoy buildings were generally roofed with thatch (in 1932: 40% thatch, 20% tiles, 20% slate and 20 % wood).

Thatch, being highly inflammable was not the most suitable as a material for roofing a bake house.

In Tresserve thatch was replaced by Montchavin tiles and the molasse built oven by a Terrassier oven, made from sandstone from Larnage (near Tain in the Drôme). Records of this refurbishment can be traced from the minutes of a municipal council meeting held on 10th June 1900. The work was carried out under the control of the council by villagers, who were free because they had no seasonal work on or because they were unemployed. At a council meeting on 10th February 1901 the mayor announced that the refurbishment of the oven was completed but that the budget had been exceeded because the roof had had to be completely remade.

The Terrassier company :



Document « Fours Fayol »

At the beginning of the 20th century Alfred Terrassier designed ovens in kit form, which were very simple to assemble. He took advantage of railway expansion to sell them far and wide, including abroad (Switzerland, Algeria, Syria, Tunisia...). The Larnage sandstone (called 'white earth'), used for their manufacture, was extracted from a quarry owned by the company.



The Terrassier factory at the start of the 20th century



The Larnage quarries in 1930

Documents « Fours Fayol »

FOURS ECONOMIQUES

EN PIÈCES RÉFRACTAIRES

EXPOSITIONS INTERNATIONALES
 PALAIS NATIONAL - PARIS 1889
 UNIVERSITÉS DE BRUXELLES
 UNIVERSITÉS DE LYON, 1903
 UNIVERSITÉS DE NANTES
 UNIVERSITÉS DE BORDEAUX
 UNIVERSITÉS DE NANCY
 UNIVERSITÉS DE STRASBOURG
 UNIVERSITÉS DE LILLE
 UNIVERSITÉS DE CLERMONT
 UNIVERSITÉS DE GRENOBLE
 UNIVERSITÉS DE DIJON
 UNIVERSITÉS DE LYON
 UNIVERSITÉS DE NANTES
 UNIVERSITÉS DE NANCY
 UNIVERSITÉS DE STRASBOURG
 UNIVERSITÉS DE LILLE
 UNIVERSITÉS DE CLERMONT
 UNIVERSITÉS DE GRENOBLE
 UNIVERSITÉS DE DIJON

ALFRED TERRASSIER

TAIN (DROME)

NOMBRE	SURTOUT	Cylindres		Foyers		Briques		Poids des briques	Poids des cylindres	Poids des foyers	Poids des tuyaux	Poids des accessoires	Poids total	Prix	Prix de revient
		N° 1	N° 2	N° 1	N° 2	N° 1	N° 2								
1	0 48	10	20	177	80	135	20	35	1	1	1	1	1000	1000	88
1	0 48	12	22	111	108	160	20	35	1	1	1	1	1350	1350	77
2	0 50	14	26	124	131	115	25	35	1	1	1	1	2000	2000	88
2	0 50	10	27	130	103	205	25	35	1	1	1	1	2000	2000	88
2	0 50	16	29	140	144	325	30	35	1	1	1	1	2500	2500	113
2	0 50	21	42	150	155	395	35	35	1	1	1	1	3000	3000	132
2	0 50	25	45	170	180	465	35	35	1	1	1	1	3500	3500	143
2	0 50	31	48	190	172	540	40	35	1	1	1	1	4000	4000	159
3	0 52	31	51	180	180	620	40	35	1	1	1	1	4500	4500	176
3	0 50	34	55	200	180	690	40	35	1	1	1	1	5000	5000	188
3	0 52	37	59	214	211	775	40	35	1	1	1	1	5500	5500	200
3	0 50	41	62	227	223	860	40	35	1	1	1	1	6000	6000	212
3	0 50	45	64	237	234	940	40	35	1	1	1	1	6500	6500	224
3	0 50	50	68	250	245	1020	40	35	1	1	1	1	7000	7000	236
4	0 53	54	70	269	264	1115	40	35	1	1	1	1	7500	7500	248

L'emballage de la verre se facture à franc par 100 Kilog.

LE PRÉSENT TARIF ANNULE TOUTS LES PRÉCÉDENTS

Tain, le 1^{er} janvier 1901.

www.delcampe.net

Document « Fours Fayol »

The communal oven in Tresserve has the following dimensions: diameter 2 m, height 0.5 m, total weight 2.6 t.
 The following table shows the composition of the kit and the sale price: 88 Francs. The total cost, including repairs to the building and installation of the oven came to a total of 800 Francs.

Terrassier's installation instructions ended with a piece about wines produced in his own vineyards:

Propriétaire important d'excellents vignobles situés dans le canton de Tain, réputé avec juste raison pour les bonnes qualités de ses vins, je tiens à la disposition de mes clients des vins de premier choix aux meilleures conditions, non plâtrés, sans colorants artificiels, naturels, garantis de raisins frais.

A. TERRASSIER.

Free advertising!

The oven in Tresserve was in operation up until the Second World War. It was put back into service at the start of the 1980s by the 'Comité des Fêtes' (the Festivals Committee) who fire it once or twice a year.



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Association pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine de Tresserve