

WHITE BREAD

Bread is everywhere in Lagos, rectangular loaves of soft white bread sold fresh every morning by vendors who stack the loaves on a large circular aluminum pan, wrap them all in plastic, put the pan on their heads and bring it to the market, to your house, to your car stuck in traffic. In January 2008 I stayed for 10 days in Behrachah Video/Audio Production studios working on "Malaria: A Preventable Disease", and every morning the bread lady showed up and all at the studio ate it for breakfast.

On 15 April, the day taxes are due in the United States, I was back in Nigeria, in the front seat of the car of the Dean of Pharmacy of the University of Lagos, looking to photograph ladies with bread on their head.

I missed a lot of shots of the ladies, my favorite missed shot was of the man on the back seat of a motor bike zooming along with a large pan of bread on his head. Although I do not have a picture of him, I do have pictures of motor bike taxis, which are the fastest way of traveling in Lagos, and also the most dangerous.

The young law student working in the Dean's office tells me she never takes a motor bike unless absolutely necessary because she had 2 nasty accidents when she was a passenger; in the second she was crushed by a taxi. So she rides buses now, which are the large yellow cars in the pictures.

Do I blame bread for the increased prevalence of diabetes in Lagos? Can I blame my British ancestors for bringing bread to Lagos? Maybe. Did they bring noodles and ice-cream? Probably not. Are changes in diet and in active lifestyle to blame for increasing prevalence of diabetes? Definitely.

By SJ Dodgson BSc(Hons), PhD

