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## Niche Market Nostalgia

One of the best things about London is that there are always new things to see and buy and experience. But sometimes in such an apparently fast-changing modern city, there is also a deep longing for the “good old-fashioned things”, such as for the taste and feel of childhood. Several branches are currently tapping into this trend successfully – in particular sweets and bread shops, both with a high note of nostalgia.

Luckily, as Gails’ Bread ([www.gailsbread.co.uk](http://www.gailsbread.co.uk)) shows, this need for nostalgia doesn’t have to be a contradiction with all things well designed and modern (as one now comes to expect in new retail concepts). Slick but rustic, the branch of this independent bakery in Notting Hill combines chunky wooden furniture and fittings with a reassuringly modern high-tech looking kitchen in the middle of the shop. The bread itself is sold under the motto “remember when bread tasted like bread”, and is guaranteed 100% chemical and preservative free. There are at least 25 varieties handmade using traditional methods as well as pastries and other delicious seasonal snacks and sandwiches.

The “doing things the old way” nostalgia factor has been “modernised” with a message of humour, friendliness and familiarity – from the café concept, to the website, and the so called V.I.B’s – Very Important Bread People (customers who are passionate about real bread who are invited to special events and tastings). Gail’s also use smart story telling from behind the scenes in the kitchen to bring the people behind the product to life; from Dave “Armstrong” who kneads a lot of bread, to Roger the pastry chef “whose hands are prettier than his face”. At the moment there are two branches, but expect to see more in the near future.

Maybe not so healthy, as Gail's, but with equal nostalgia potential, is the trend towards old fashioned independent sweet shops. One just opened is Mrs Kibbles Olde Sweet Shoppe in Soho, whose name is a parody of old-fashioned-ness. Here all the sweets are on display in glass jars with pink stripy labels – just as in childhood – with good old favourites such as liquorice, sugar mice and sherbet pips. If you can't get there to satisfy childhood cravings, several sweet companies such as A Quarter Of, British Candy and Hope and Greenwood have set up webstores up offering such hard-to-find and handmade delicacies on-line. Bookstores are also – like sweets and bread – one of the key branches where people bemoan the loss of the small independent retailers. The comeback of small personalised "boutique bookshops" is noticeable in London, with several successful shops such as Haywood Hill, The London Review Bookshop or Crockatt & Powell springing up in the capital. With this food for thought and food for the stomach – these nostalgia niche markets are helping reshape the retail landscape.

[www.aquarterof.co.uk](http://www.aquarterof.co.uk)

[www.britishcandy.com](http://www.britishcandy.com)

[www.hopeandgreenwood.co.uk](http://www.hopeandgreenwood.co.uk)

[www.justjars.co.uk](http://www.justjars.co.uk)

[www.gailsbread.co.uk](http://www.gailsbread.co.uk)