

RECIPES

Introduction

When I was at the University of York, the Fitter group met weekly for a lab meeting. We gathered around the coffee pot before moving to a quiet seminar room where we would discuss general aspects of lab management and share ideas before one of us, elected the week before, made some sort of presentation. This would be a recent publication for dissection (sometimes demolition), a preparatory run of a conference paper or presentation of some interim results so that the rest of the group knew what we were up to. The elected organiser was also obliged to provide cake - or alternative delight such as Tim Daniell's popular home made ice cream - and many excellent 'oral presentations' were prepared for our pleasure. I have put together some of the recipes and added others that I enjoyed thanks to people at the U of York.

SIMNEL CAKE

Bek Farley (D.Phil in the Fitter lab., now Dr R.A. Farley, publications chief at the Field Studies Council <http://www.field-studies-council.org/> - we both applied for the job and she got it. I was relieved and now correspond with her as a contented author).

1 lb Sainsbury's luxury mixed dried fruit.
4 fl oz (125 ml) brandy/sherry/whisky
8 oz butter or margarine
Grated peel of 2 lemons or oranges
8 oz caster sugar
4 medium eggs
9 oz sifted plain flour
tsp baking powder (or use self-raising flour)
1½ lb almond paste (ready-made marzipan?)
a little extra beaten egg
5 oz sifted icing sugar
warm water
½ tsp vanilla essence

1. Place dried fruit in a bowl, stir in the booze and leave to soak overnight.
2. Line base & sides of an 8" cake tin with greaseproof paper and set oven to 330 °F (160 °C - gas mark 3).
3. Cream butter with grated peel and sugar until smooth. Beat in whole eggs, one at a time, adding flour as you go.
4. Fold in sozzled fruit as you include the flour. Spread half into prepared tine. Roll almond paste into a disc of just less than tin size and place it on top of the mixture in the tin and then the rest of the mixture. Add a circular lid of greaseproof paper to prevent singeing of the top of the cake.
5. Bake for 45 - 60 (-90) minutes.

[p.s. Simnel cakes I have known have a layer of almond paste on top as well as inside, and a ring of little almond paste balls around the margin. The cake is cut from the centre through each of the balls so that each wedge has 'ears', and resembles a mouse's head - *ed*]

A cake recipe in the form of a learned paper in *The New Phytologist*

A modified method for the provision of marmalade cake to a large group of voracious research ecologists and plant physiologists.

James Merryweather

Abstract

Cakes are produced for birthdays and weekly lab. meetings. This is the orange equivalent of *Death by Chocolate*, and we need to make two of them to satisfy the present extensive Fitter team and the associates who emerge from all corners when word gets out that there's cake to be had. Smaller teams should divide ingredients by two.

Materials and Methods

24 oz self-raising flour

12 oz margarine (butter if you like it rich)

1 lb sugar

4 tablespoons of good marmalade (no cheap more-sugar-than-oranges rubbish)

Rind of two oranges coarsely grated

4 eggs

Half a pint of orange juice

Rub the margarine into the flour, followed by the sugar and then carefully add the other ingredients, smoothing the mixture with an electric whisk. Pour into 4 sandwich tins and bake at gas mark 5-6 (375-400 °C) for 20-25 minutes. Sandwich pairs of cakes with marmalade and oodles of whipped cream. Serve with morning coffee or (and?) afternoon tea.

Results

Guzzle - Yum - Empty plate, bar a jammy knife, a few crumbs and a smear of cream.

Discussion

“Who's making the cake next week?”

References

Patten M. (196?). *The every day cook book.....etc.*

MERRYWEATHER MARMALADE

(A reduced-sugar version of Dr Charles Kightly¹ of York's famous recipe)

2 Kg Seville Oranges

5 Lemons

8 Pints Water

4 Kg Sugar

Remove stalks and nasty bits from the skins of the fruit and halve them. Extract the juice, pips and other matter into a sieve over your boiling pan. I use one of those fluted wooden hand juicers, which is not only an efficient, controllable juicer but it also pushes out most of the pips efficiently and everything goes straight into the sieve in one go. Stir the pulp occasionally to encourage the juice into the pan.

¹ Highly recommended: *Country Voices* by Charles Kightly. Thames & Hudson.

Slice the skins as thickly or thinly as you wish. This is a mind-numbing process, so make sure you have something else to occupy you: thought or distraction. I recommend good music or a radio play.

Add the water and sliced peel to the juice in the pan. Place the pips and pith in a net bag and hang it in the juice mix. Bring to the boil and simmer vigorously for ages: until it is reduced to about half its original volume. This will produce a lot of steam which, I find, condenses on the ceiling leaving unsightly residues. Open the back door and/or switch on your extractor fan.

Remove the bag of pips, discard its contents and wash the bag ready for making marmalade batch #2. Add the sugar², stirring the while. Simmer until the marmalade - for that is what it nearly is - will set. Place a little blob on a plate you have precooled in the fridge and wait a little while. When cool, does the surface of the blob wrinkle when pushed with a finger tip? If so, you have jar-ready marmalade.

When you think your marmalade might be ready soon, place jam jars and lids in the oven and heat them for a while at around 100 °C to sterilise them and prevent shattering when you ...

Pour the hot marmalade into the hot jars (on a tray and as neatly as possible to make cleaning of sticky jars and surfaces less of a burden). Place a greaseproof paper disc on the marmalade surface in each jar and screw their lids on loosely (or cover with cellophane discs held down with rubber bands). Tighten lids when cool and proudly label the jars (and lids so that content of each can be seen from above when jars are tightly clustered in a cupboard).

James Merryweather 22nd January 2006

My efforts to date have been:

- **Special 1st Solo** (Jan. 2005) 6lb oranges; 5 bags/12 lb sugar (plus usual water & lemons)
This one caught on the bottom of the pan and, in consequence I had to spend a lot of time fishing out burnt bits and there were still plenty of unpleasant black specks in it.
- **2nd Solo** (8 Feb. 2005) 4lb oranges; 3 bags/6¾ lb sugar (plus usual water & lemons)
I stirred this more diligently, therefore no black specks.
- **2006 batch #1** 5 lb oranges; 5 lemons; 4 bags sugar; 8 pt water
This one will have a greater proportion of sugar because I want it to take less time to set. If it's too sweet, then I'll change back next time. [it was fine, but I must be bolder with my boiling - it's runny]
- **2006 batch #2** Recipe as batch #1.
This was a nice amber colour (see footnote), but I didn't boil it long enough and it's pretty runny. Will I be satisfied until next year or will I laboriously disenjar it and do a re-boil to solidify it?

² I just realised that I should have added the sugar *after* the big boil. That's why mine was dark last year (because the sugar caramelises), why batch #1 is darkening as I write and, perhaps, why my marmalade always takes so long to reach setting point. I'll do batch #2 properly and report thereafter.

A PUZZLE PUDDING

(I'm afraid I don't know the answer, but I think it might be a Banoffee)

This is the title:



By *Martyn Craft* (one time student and composer of very modern Music at York, now care worker and plantsman somewhere in France - *if he sees this please will he tell me his new address*).

[N.B. with regard to spellings: *sic* throughout]

8 inch Pastry Case (Ne cookez pas):-

FLING

2 egg yolks
¼ (?) pt milk
3 ozs sugar.
3 Bananas. (sliced & peeled horizontally)
Raspberry jam
Coconut (dintegrated)
10p Pistachio essence

TPING

3 egg whites
2 ozs sugar

Spread jam on pastry case. Cover with bananas. Mix egg bits & cow juice & sucre together (& essence). Pour over base.

Bake in a moderate oven until custard is set.

MEANWHILE make a meringue. when custard set, remove from oven. Increase temperature to 450° (7?). Spread top of custard with meringue. Sprinkle with disintegrated coconut. Return to oven to brown.

Serve (or throw away - *as per Amblongus Pie*).

COCONUT CREAM PIE (BARBADOS)

Sean Carrington (formerly graduate student at York, now Prof. back in Barbados)

<http://scitec.uwichill.edu.bb/bcs/staff/cmssc/index-sc.htm>

FILLING

4 oz sugar
pinch nutmeg
1 tsp vanilla essence
½ pt. hot milk
pinch salt
4 oz grated coconut
3 egg yolks (lightly beaten)
1 8 inch pastry case

TOPPING

3 egg whites
4 oz caster sugar
½ teaspoon of vanilla essence
grated coconut to decorate

1. Preheat oven at 425 °F
2. Line an 8" pastry tin with shortcrust pastry.

3. Heat milk and combine ingredients of filling.
4. Place filling in pie tin and bake at 425 °F for 20 min. (approx.)
5. Cool.
6. Beat egg whites till stiff peaks form. Gradually beat sugar into mixture.
7. Spread meringue on pie, sprinkle with coconut and place in oven at 350 °F until gently browned.
8. Chill before serving.

VICTORIA SPONGE

Jill Boswell (graduated c. 1979)

A very useful basic recipe which I have modified to great effect to make jolly little party buns of all flavours and colours (often conflicting e.g. blue/chocolate; red/mint; green/strawberry) and a few random extras such as 'chilli pickle surprise' or 'crunchy cockroach special' (a few cornflakes concealed within).

4 oz marg.
 4 oz sugar
 4 oz S.r. flour
 2 eggs (beaten)

Cream marg. and sugar until light and creamy.
 Beat in eggs and flour alternately.
 Place mixture into a greased 7" tin or two 7" sandwich tins.
 bake in 325-350 °F oven.
 25-30 mins in 2 tins
 40-45 mins in 1 tin.
 Sandwich together with jam.

CHOCOLATE FUDGE CAKE

Hilary Quine (Technician in Biology Department at York <1982)

½ lb Biscuits
 4 oz. marg.
 1 dessert sp. sugar
 3 " " dr.* choc. or
 2 " " cocoa
 1½ table sp. syrup

Melt marg. & syrup in pan and add sugar & cocoa.
 Crush biscuits & pour in mixture.
 Place in flat tin & squash flat.
 Cool & eat.

* dark?

NUTTY BANANA BREAD

from a paper bag advertising Fyffes bananas.

2 lb LOAF

Ingredients

3 oz butter

6 oz caster sugar

2 standard eggs

10 oz bananas (skins removed)

8 oz plain flour

3 level teaspoons baking powder

½ level teaspoon salt

2 oz walnuts (roughly chopped)

Method

Cream butter until soft then work in sugar. Add eggs one at a time and beat to a smooth mixture.

Well mash bananas, add to egg mixture and beat until blended.

Sieve together flour, salt and baking powder and stir one tablespoonful into nuts.

Add remaining flour to egg mixture, stir until mixed, then add nuts and stir again.

Turn mixture into a well greased loaf tin measuring 9 by 5 by 2½ inches and bake at approximately 350 °F or mark 4 for 1 - 1¼ hours.

WIGS or WIGGS or WIGGES

18th century spiced buns (wedges)

Served at a grand concert in York Guildhall: BELLS & BONEFIRE, CAKES & ALE

To make one dozen wiggs:

1 lb flour - half white, half wholemeal

3 oz butter

2 oz sugar

2 teaspoonfuls mixed spice

pinch ground cardamom

½ oz yeast

½ pint milk

pinch of salt

Melt the butter and allow it to cool.

Put the flour, the mixed spice, the cardamom, the sugar, the butter and the salt in a bowl and mix. Make a well. Pour in the yeast, creamed in a little warm water, and the milk. Knead thoroughly, adding more milk or flour if required to make a smooth, soft dough. Roll out the dough on a floured board and cut into wedge shaped buns (or wide, circular buns, cut almost through so that they can be divided into wedges when cooked). Put them on a floured baking sheet to prove for 30 minutes. Bake them for about 20 minutes in a hot oven (400 - 440 °F - about gas mark 7), turning them round at half time. Glaze with concentrated apple juice.

MO'S CHILLI SURPRISE CAKE

Rosemary Merryweather (his elder daughter)

Ingredients

4oz butter

4 oz sugar (some brown if preferred)

Generous quantity of honey

the more you add, the gooey the cake will be - Mo tells me she used half a jar!

2 eggs

4 oz self raising flour

Cinnamon & nutmeg to taste

Finely chopped (or dry powdered) chilli

Method

Cream the sugar and butter and add beaten eggs and honey. Fold in the flour and add cinnamon and nutmeg followed by chilli. The last requires some careful judgement. Be aware that the chilli flavour and heat will increase with cooking. Pour into a greased loaf tin and cook for an hour at gas mark 4 taking care that the top of the cake does not burn. When cool, cut the cake through the middle and fill it with creme fraiche laced with honey and lemon juice.

The surprise is that, if the amount of chilli is properly judged, this cake works as a cake rather than a culinary accident.

TO MAKE AN AMBLONGUS PIE

Edward Lear (1812-1888) who is no longer a member of the Fitter research team, and never was. <http://www2.pair.com/mgraz/Lear/index.html>

Take four pounds (say 4½ pounds) of fresh Amblongusses, and put them in a small pipkin. Cover them with water and boil them for 8 hours incessantly, after which add 2 pints of new milk, and proceed to boil for 4 hours more.

When you have ascertained that the Amblongusses are quite soft, take them out and place them in a wide pan, taking care to shake them well previously.

Grate some nutmeg over the surface, and cover them carefully with powdered gingerbread, curry-powder, and a sufficient quantity of Cayenne pepper.

Remove the pan into the next room, and place it on the floor. Bring it back again, and let it simmer for three-quarters of an hour. Shake the pan violently till all the Amblongusses have become of a pale purple colour.

Then, having prepared the paste, insert the whole carefully, adding at the same time a small pigeon, 2 slices of beef, 4 cauliflowers, and any number of oysters.

Watch patiently till the crust begins to rise, and add a pinch of salt from time to time.

Serve up in a clean dish, and throw the whole out of the window as fast as possible.

NOT REALLY UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE

James Merryweather

Ingredients

10 oz butter

10 oz sugar

6 eggs

12 oz ground almonds (or self-raising flour plus almond essence)

Quartered plums or chopped peaches, nectarines, apricots etc.

Method

Cream the sugar and butter and add the beaten eggs. Fold in the ground almonds followed by as much fruit as you dare. Pour into two sponge tins and cook at gas mark 4 for one hour, watching to make sure that the tops don't burn. It doesn't rise much, but it's still reasonably light and very juicy.

Turn the two cakes out and cool them before sandwiching with whipped cream or *crème fraiche* with calvados (available in Sainsbury's at Christmas). You could even serve it as a pudding, hot with custard or the above.

Mouthwatering post-script: I wonder what one could achieve by adding broken amaretti to cake or filling?

PERFECT YORKSHIRE PUDDINGS

James Merryweather

Many years ago I had a genuine Yorkshire mother-in-law and, boy, could she cook. Every Sunday she spent hours hand beating her batter in a little bowl with a spoon. In a moment of careless bravado I suggested a whisk might be more convenient and just as effective. Her reply was restrained and polite, but I wished I'd kept my mouth shut. Ever since I didn't have a mother-in-law any more, I've striven to recreate her puddings, occasionally with acceptable results, but usually somewhere not far short of failure. It took 20 years, but on 17th October 1999 I cracked it. I was proud. I was arrogant. My glow of success was insufferable. I strutted about the kitchen in my stripy apron, basking in the pleasure of puddings perfectly crafted. They rose fast, puffy and light, with high walls which were ideal for retaining a delicious pool of gravy.

Ingredients (enough for 2 greedy people)

3 heaped table spoons of sifted self-raising flour (mother-in-law insisted on plain)

2 large, fresh, farm eggs

pinch of salt

semi-skimmed milk to make a thick mix

water to thin after standing

Method

Put the flour in a large bowl with salt and add eggs. Mix and combine, adding milk a little at a time until as unlumpy as possible, but still reasonably stiff. Then take your electric whisk (sorry, mother-in-law) and beat the batter a lot, until it's smooth and bubbles gently break out on the surface. You want the thing full of air which it gives up reluctantly. Then let it stand at room temperature for an hour or two depending on

time available. That enables the starch grains in the flour to steep and swell and the whole batter to 'blend' and 'mature'.

Take your pudding tin. You can buy a proper Yorkshire Pudding tin which is about 20 cm square with four wells. You can alternatively make lots of little ones in a bun tin or one huge one if you wish. The secret is now to be revealed. Put rather a lot of oil (3-4 mm perhaps) into each well and get it hot. In mother-in-law's day, lard or beef dripping was used, but in a modern world vegetable oil is favoured. Trying to be trendy I've used olive oil, but I think that may have been one of the reasons for failure. It doesn't get hot enough, but sunflower oil seems to work well. Put the tin on the top shelf of a very hot oven until the oil almost smokes. While that's happening, add water to the batter to thin it, and beat it thoroughly again. The consistency of the batter is hard to describe, but if you make it too thin of course it will lack the wherewithal to rise and become a decent pudding. It should perhaps be a bit thicker than a pancake batter, but over to you for trial and error. When you add the batter (about 1 cm of it) to the hot oil it should spit and bubble, not sit on the bottom of the tin sulking. Get this done quickly and the tin back into the oven. You can peep cautiously after 5-10 minutes (back door shut - no draughts) and, if you're lucky, the sides will have risen rapidly to make cup shaped puddings 10+ cm high. Cook until brown and crisp, about 20 minutes.

In old Yorkshire, when the main dish of the poor was insufficient to satisfy, puddings were served with gravy before the main meal so that the hunger had been partially satisfied by the time the meagre meat portions were served. Nowadays, it's as usual to serve the puddings with the main roast meat and veg., or even to make giant puddings (and this is a jolly good late 20th century 'tradition') as a receptacle of the whole dinner. If you make enough delicious puddings you could do both!

"What about the gravy?" I hear you cry.

SERIOUSLY GOOD GRAVY

After the method of Eric Cowell of Wicken

Many people cannot understand why the English like gravy. They have probably had the misfortune to experience those nasty, slimy brown products which come out of packets, canteens and the kitchens of lazy, unimaginative cooks. There's a lot of rotten and indifferent gravy in Britain, so the secret of good gravy is to make your own, spending a little time, money and creativity on it.

Ingredients

Whole onions quartered (the skins will provide brown colouration).

Sliced mushrooms.

Carrots sliced lengthwise.

Chopped celery (not too much).

Any odd bits of cabbage e.g. outer leaves, stalk of cauliflower or diced swede/turnip

Chopped parsnip.

You can even use coarse peelings (cleaned) of any veg. being prepared.

Freshly ground black pepper.

A little ground cumin.

A touch of chilli, but not enough to be noticed.

Juices from the roast meat joint (remove fat, but leave a little because that's where the flavour is).

Appropriate meat stock. If you don't have any, try high quality stock cube(s) or a decent bouillabase, but please be careful not to ruin what is, so far, a good gravy. Salt to taste (*n.b.* there is a lot of salt in stock cubes - if you use them). Thickening see* below.

Method

Take a large saucepan and add a few of inches of water. Then put in all you need to make a tasty vegetable stock, and boil well. Drain stock into bowl and fish out all the good bits to return to the gravy (to give it body and interest, and prevent waste of good veg.). Add meat juices from the roast, stock (or stock cube if you must) to give meaty flavour and thicken* with Yorkshire Pudding mix, which is the very best thickener I know (otherwise flour, liquefied with milk).