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Bake in a Gentle Warme Oven

By Margaret Bruechart

HERE'S another hint to the hurried housewife: Along with your Christmas shopping, do your Christmas baking early! Yes, of course, you want a very special cake for Christmas, but if you wait until the day before to bake it, you'll likely find that the actual minutes required for cake baking simply do not exist.

Food cake is the perfect Christmas cake, for to be at its best it should be ripened for at least a month before it is eaten, which means that it must be baked previous to the Christmas rush. Then, too, fruit cake is peculiarly a Christmas cake in itself. Somehow, its fruit-laden spiciness is suggestive of Yule tide, of hale and hearty goodwill.

It seems quite wonderful that we can create something of this atmosphere by means of a cake which can, thanks to standardized recipes, utensils and baking conditions, be made as quickly and efficiently as you please. The construction of a cake for a special occasion in those bygone days of which we have been speaking, was a matter of greater importance, engaging the attention of the entire domestic household from the Teeman of the Pantry down to the scullery maids. Hours were spent blending the sugar and butter, for sugar came in hunks and required energetic maceration before it could be blended with the butter. There were cake failures in Shakespeare's time as there are now, for in 'The Taming of the Shrew' Grenis laments, 'Our cake's dough on both sides.'

To us who are used to explicit directions, it would not be at all surprising if failure instead of success had been the general rule, for the recipes were very superficial and sketchy. Here is one of the prize recipes of 1623:

'To make excellent spice cakes, take a halfe pecke of very fine Whetflower, take almost one pound of sweet butter, and some good milke and creame mixt together, set it on the fire, and put in your batter, and a good deale of sugar, and let it melt together; then strain Saffron into your milke in good quantity; then take seven or eight spoonefull of good Ale barmo, and eight eggs with two yokes and mix them together, then put your milke to it when it is somewhat cold, and into your flower put salt, Aniscedes bruised, eleves and Mace, and a good deale of Cinnamon; then work all together good and stiffe, that you need not worke in any flower after; then put in a little rose water cold, then rub it well in the thing you knead it in, and worke it thoroughly; if it be not sweet enough, scrape in a little more sugar, and pull it all to pieces, and barle in a good quantity of currants, and so worke all together againe, and bake your cake as you see cause in a gentle warme oven.' (Although not stated in the recipe, wine or brandy were added for flavor.)

It would certainly require all of a woman's intuitive power to hit upon an exact 'almost' a pound of butter. Just what is meant by 'hurling in' the currants?

We feel very Pollyanna-ish when we take out our own cake No. 11 from the Bell recipe file and read this recipe for dark fruit cake:

Citron, 1 lb.
Raisins, currants, 2 lbs. (6 c.) each
Almonds, 1 lb. (3 c.)
Butter, 1 lb. (2 c.)
Brown sugar, 1 lb. (2 1/2 c.)
Flour, 1 lb. (4 c.)
Eggs, 1 doz.
Salt, 1 tsp.
Liquid, 1/2 c. (ginger ale or fruit juices)
Cinnamon, mace, 2 tsp. each
Nutmeg, allspice, 1 tsp. each
Cloves, 1/2 tsp.

Shave and chop heated citron. Chop raisins. Blend and cut almonds. Use conventional cake method of mixing for remainder of ingredients (cream butter and sugar for 5 minutes or more). Separate egg whites and yolks. Beat yolks with fat and sugar. Add flour and milk alternately, beginning with ending and ending with flour. Flour should be beaten in; milk only partially mixed. After adding last portion of flour, beat 1 minute. Stir in beaten egg whites, then beat 25 seconds. Fold in prepared fruit and nuts before the beaten egg whites. Line pans with three layers of oiled paper. Spread cake batter three inches thick. Decorate surface with cherries, almonds, etc., if desired. Bake in a moderate oven (165° C. or 325° F.) for 2 hours.

A deep enamel mixing bowl with sloping sides is the most satisfactory, and should be of 12 quart capacity for this recipe. Weighing the ingredients is much simpler than measuring when such large amounts are used. Many scales are equipped with a screw, by means of which the indicator may be turned back to zero after the empty container has been placed on the scale pan.

Baking pans having straight rather than flaring sides are best if some of the cakes are to be wrapped and packed. (I neglected to mention that small fruit cakes are a solution for part of one's gift problem.) The only precaution in

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Merry Christmas in Old Russia...

By Vivian Richie

The jingle of bells; the muffled thud or horses’ hoofs in the soft snow, merry cries and laughter of the sleigh loads of happy, fun­clad children as they ride through the streets of any little snow-shrouded Russian village, leaving cheer and presents and travel from house to house, will no doubt be lacking in the coming holiday season. With the radical changes in the activites of the country, it is not surprising that the holiday customs should also change or even go—though not be 'forgotten' by the older members of that country, at least.

At Christmas time the old Russian custom of spreading voskriëniia (holiday greetings) was for the younger people of the town to load their sleighs with food and presents and travel from house to house, leaving a word of cheer here and a present there, and perhaps receiving some little token of remembrance in return. Often they were invited into a house filled with songs, the music of the Russian lacka, violins, guitars and the smell of lemon and raspberry preserves, and to sip a cup of tea and munch small Russian cakes while they warmed themselves after their cold ride through the streets. All was quiet and joy. The whole hamlet resounded with their fun and everybody was happy. Christmas to them was a time to enjoy giving and for days everyone had been fasting so that he could do justice to the feasts that were prepared in advance and which were always the culminating event in their joyous celebrating.

When the rounds of the town had been made they all returned home to a table laden with gifts—cookies, fruit, caviar, herring and wines of various kinds. The dinner itself consisted of roasts, either fowl or small pigs baked in a crust, tomato pickles, several kinds of rich hot breads to which had been added spices, and raisins and a raisin cheese dish. This latter dish, which is very simple but tasty, is made of sweetened rich cottage cheese with semi-stewed raisins. It is used as we use our salad and is known in Russia as 'Çir.'

For dessert they may have another dish called 'Kouzia', which is made of rice cooked with raisins and served with a sauce made of honey sweetened water.

One of the Russian methods of serving meat is to wrap it with rice in bread

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Merry Christmas in Old Russia

(Continued from page 2) dough, then flatten out, fry it in a greased frying pan or deep fat. This is served with rich, thick, sour milk, which, by the way, is one of the favorite dishes in the Russian household.

The Russian people use many of the same vegetables that we do, but as a whole vegetables play a very minor part in their diets, with breads, meat and rice taking the first rank in popularity.

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(Continued from page 2) the preparation of the pads consists in fitting the oilcd paper snugly into the corners so that the folds will not protrude into the batter and cause an uneven, broken crust.

After the cakes have been removed from the oven, they should be cooled thoroughly in the paper in which they are baked, then wrapped securely in a layer of heavy waxed paper and tied with twine. An old storage crock or a boiler such as is used for canning are good storage containers.

Having put your cake safely away from curious fingers and hungry mouths, you may forget all about it until Christmas, when it will be produced like magic before the amased eyes of your family and you will be perfectly justified in complimenting yourself on your foresight. Remember, there are only 30 more days until Christmas, so bake your fruit cake now!

By Katherine Goepfinger

(Continued from page 3) to say nothing of the time and materials used in running such experiments. It is far more pleasant and less expensive for the average housewife to try out suggestions made by the home economics expert who has proved that young beef or fowl should be cooked in a covered roaster; that cold water poured into a hot baking dish will result in a total loss of the dish, or that one bay leaf is sufficient for seasoning an average size beef roast.

The young women now entering Iowa State from high schools are prepared for going on with work in chemistry, physics and other subjects necessary for specializing in the various branches of home economics. When the electric iron fails to heat or something goes wrong with the waffle iron, the home economics graduate, instead of sending for an electrician, locates the trouble and makes the necessary repairs.—(Reprinted from the November Alumni.)

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