

From Mrs Gobbins' Kitchen



Welsh Cakes for Breakfast

“It was 7.15 a.m. Dotty pulled open the heavy bedroom drapes and looked out into the eerie morning light. For a brief moment she watched the first mist rising from the moor in the distance. Then tripping down the back steps and in to the kitchen, she found Gobby already busying herself, merrily humming some unrecognisable tune.

Dotty’s eyes came at once to rest on a rather precarious but wonderfully scented pile of freshly baked Welsh cakes, still steaming on the hot plate. Grabbing a couple, Dotty pocketed one and shoved the other unceremoniously into her mouth, whilst simultaneously making a quick dash towards the kitchen door. There was a lot to do before eleven o’clock and her first meeting with Great Uncle Winchester.

“My! Aren’t you in a hurry this morning,” remarked Gobby, cheerily. “I hope you like the Welsh cakes.” She eyed the crummy evidence peeking out of Dotty’s jumper pocket. “I made them especially. I thought they might remind you of home. I expect your mother cooked them all the time, did she?” The old cook smiled benignly.

Dotty didn’t like to say they almost never ate Welsh cakes in her household; and those that they did eat certainly weren’t home made by her mum. They were more likely to be bought from the local Tesco’s or from Eddie’s on the corner. But Dotty appreciated the sentiment anyway.”

About traditional Welsh Cakes

Welsh cakes, also known as *pics*, or *bakestones* - after the cast iron griddle they are traditionally cooked in, have been popular in Wales since the late 1800s. Welsh cakes are small, round flat cakes – a little like drop scones - made with currants and mixed spice.

Welsh cakes taste best when served warm sprinkled with sugar, but they can be eaten cold, too. Unlike traditional English scones, they are usually eaten without the accompaniment of jam or butter (although see below for Mrs Gobbins’ festive recipe twist).

You will need:

- 225g/8oz/1 cup plain (all purpose) flour
- 100g/4oz/ ½ cup butter (salted or unsalted)
- 75g/3oz/1/3 cup caster (superfine) sugar¹
- 50g/2oz/¼ cup currants
- ½ teaspoon (tsp) baking powder²
- ¼ tsp mixed spice³
- 1 egg
- A pinch of salt
- A little milk to bind

What to do:

Sift the flour, baking powder and mixed spice together into a mixing bowl.

Cut up the butter and rub into the flour.

Stir in the sugar and currants, pour in the egg and mix to form a dough. Use a little milk if the mixture is dry.

Roll the dough out on a lightly floured surface to about the thickness of a biscuit. Use a pastry cutter to cut out rounds. They should be roughly circular, a few inches (7–8 cm) in diameter and about half an inch (1–1.5 cm) thick.

Cook the cakes on a greased bake stone, griddle or simply in the frying pan, until golden. The heat should not be too high, as the cakes will cook on the outside too quickly, and not in the middle. Once cooked, sprinkle with caster sugar and serve.

For a seasonal alternative Mrs Gobbins suggests substituting the currants for mixed dried fruit and some grated orange rind. This festive version is delicious served with some softened butter combined with a little orange juice, zest and icing sugar.

Apple dragons!

Welsh cakes with grated apple added to the mix make for a tasty alternative to traditional Welsh Cakes, and they will stay moist in the tin for longer. The Welsh call these ‘apple dragons’.

¹ If you don't have caster or superfine sugar, you can use an electric coffee grinder or blender to grind your granulated sugar down to a finer consistency.

² Baking powder is a raising agent commonly used in British baking. You can make a substitute baking powder by mixing 1 tsp of baking soda with ½ tsp cornstarch and ½ tsp cream of tartar.

³ A mix of spices often used in traditional British baking. A rough and ready substitute in the US is pumpkin pie spice, or you can make your own by mixing 4 tsp cinnamon, 2 tsp coriander, 1 tsp allspice, ½ tsp nutmeg, ½ tsp ginger and ¼ tsp cloves.