

History At Home - Recipes

Looking for something fun to do while you're staying at home? The Stoneham Historical Commission is here to help with recipes from history.

These recipes involve using knives and the oven. Make sure you have an adult to help you in the kitchen.

Colonial Ginger Cakes

A popular treat going back to colonial days, a traditional ginger cake should be a cross between a gingersnap and a soft cookie. These particular cookies are based on the ones served at Colonial Williamsburg.

Ingredients

- 2 1/2 all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 cup (1stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 1/2 cup molasses
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- Confectioners' sugar, for garnish

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper and set aside

In a large bowl, mix together the flour, sugar, salt, baking soda, and spices

Mix the butter into the dry ingredients using your hands

In a small saucepan, warm the molasses and cream over low heat so they blend together. Stir often. Add the molasses and cream mixture to the bowl and mix into a dough

Remove the dough from the bowl and place on a lightly floured work surface. Roll it out to a 1/4-inch thickness. Cut into circles. A round cookie cutter or a cup works great for this. You can make them as big or small as you want, but 3 or 4 inches is probably best.

Bake for 10 minutes, until firm on the edges and slightly soft in the centers

Let cool slightly, then dust with confectioners' sugar and serve

Dill Pickles

For most of human history, the best way to preserve food was to pickle it. You can pickle almost any kind of food, with recipes existing to pickle fruit, vegetables, and even meat. But one of the most popular things to pickle is the cucumber, so popular in fact that the word 'pickle' has come to mean 'pickled cucumber' in most places.

Ingredients

- Pickling cucumbers
- 4 cups of water
- 2 cups of white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons of kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- A big bunch of dill
- 1 head of garlic
- 10 peppercorns
- Clean mason jars with lids

Slice the cucumbers into quarters, lengthwise, so they look like pickle spears. Remove the skin from the garlic cloves and smash them.

Combine water, vinegar, salt, and sugar in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil and stir until the sugar and salt dissolve. Let cool to room temperature.

Add the cucumbers to the jars. Make sure there's room for the brine. Add the dill, garlic, and peppercorns. Finish by adding enough brine to cover the cucumbers. Put the lids on and make sure they're tight before they go into the refrigerator. After a week, you'll have pickles.

Great Depression Chocolate Cake

Did You Know that you can make a cake without eggs or milk?

During the Great Depression and World War 2, a lot of people in cities couldn't access regular food goods like milk, eggs, and butter either because of the costs or because of rationing. Thanks to the people who lived through those times, we have recipes that can be made without those ingredients.

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 Cups flour (all-purpose)
- 3 Tbsp. cocoa (unsweetened)
- 1 Cup sugar (All purpose sugar – Granulated Pure Cane Sugar)
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. white vinegar
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 5 Tbsp. vegetable oil (olive oil works just fine)
- 1 Cup water

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Grease an 8” square baking pan.
3. Mix the flour, cocoa, sugar, baking soda, and salt into your baking pan. Make 3 depressions in that mixture – two small, one larger. Pour vinegar in one depression, vanilla in the other, and the vegetable oil in the third larger depression. Pour water over everything. Mix well until smooth.
4. Bake on the middle rack of the oven for 35 minutes. Check with a toothpick to make sure it comes out clean. Cool. Top with your favorite frosting. Enjoy!

Note: Oven baking times may vary, be sure to check your cake to make sure you do not over bake.

Wartime Carrot Cake

Did you know that during the Second World War, many foods were rationed at home so they were available for the troops fighting in Europe. Families would get a ration book that determined how much they were allowed to buy. To help with this, people started sweetening food with fruit instead of sugar.

Ingredients

- 8 oz self-rising flour
- 3 oz butter or margarine or another cooking fat
- 3 oz sugar
- 4 oz finely grated carrot
- 2 oz dried fruit such as raisins or currants or sultanas
- A little milk or water

- 1 egg

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F

Put the flour in the bowl. Work the butter into the flour with your hands. Add the sugar, dried fruit, and egg. Mix well and then add enough of the milk or water to make the dough sticky.

Pour the mixture into a lined baking dish and cook until golden in color

Butter

Ingredients

- 1-2 cups of heavy whipping cream
- A clean water-tight container
- A clean marble
- A little salt

Put the cream in the container along with the marble. Add salt. Next, you're going to want to make sure it is completely sealed so no cream can get out. Then you start shaking. This can take anywhere from 5 minutes to 30 minutes. When it is done, it should have separated into yellowish butter and buttermilk. Drain the buttermilk off.

For ideas on how to work with your butter once you've made it or ways to improve the recipe, check out <http://www.webexhibits.org/butter/doityourself.html>