

## Cooking During the Civil War

### CIVIL WAR ERA UNITS OF MEASURE:

A set of tin measures (with small spouts or lips) from a gallon down to half a jill will be found very convenient in every kitchen; though common pitchers, bowls, glasses, &c., may be substituted. It is also well to have a set of wooden measures from a bushel to a quarter of a peck.

Let it be remembered, that of liquid measure:

Two jills = half a pint

Two pints = one quart

Four quarts = one gallon

About twenty-five drops of any thin liquid will fill a common sized teaspoon.

Four table-spoonfuls or half a jill will fill a common wine glass.

Four wine glasses will fill a half-pint or common tumbler or a large coffee-cup.

A quart black bottle holds in reality about a pint and a half.

Of dry measure—

Half a gallon = quarter of a peck

One gallon = half a peck

Two gallons = one peck

Four gallons = half a bushel

Eight gallons = one bushel

Of flour, butter, sugar and most articles used in cakes and pastry, a quart is generally about equal in quantity to a pound avoirdupois, (sixteen ounces.) Avoirdupois is the weight designated throughout this book.

Ten eggs generally weigh one pound before they are broken.

A table-spoonful of salt is generally about one ounce.

### FOOD SUBSTITUTIONS:

Before secession, a typical Southern family's grocery bill was \$6.65 per month. By 1864, it was \$400 per month. In fact, Confederate dollars were so devalued that many families could not afford to buy food staples. As produce became more and more scarce or expensive, people had to find substitutes for common foods. Many residents were quite creative, and although most of the substitutes did not survive until modern times, satisfied southern appetites to some degree. Here are some examples:

#### **Meat (at least \$20 for one meal):**

Domestic animals, crows, frogs, locusts, snails, snakes and worms

#### **Coffee:**

Okra seeds that were browned, dried sweet potatoes or carrots, roasted acorns, wheat berries

**Tea:**

Herbs, sumac berries, sassafras roots, raspberry, blackberry, huckleberry and holly leaves

**Champagne:**

Water and corn and molasses, fermented in an old barrel

**Milk or cream:**

Beat an egg white to a froth and add a small lump of butter, mix well.

**Sugar:**

Molasses, sorghum, dried, ground figs, honey, watermelon syrup

**Vinegar (apple):**

molasses, honey, beets, figs, persimmon, may-apples and sorghum

**Flour:**

Rice, rice flour, cornmeal, and rye flour.

**Salt:**

Boiled sea water, or taking dirt from the smokehouse, adding water and boiling it. Skim off the scum on the top and drop in cold water, and the salt sinks to the bottom. The impurities could be boiled off. Wood ashes or gunpowder could substitute for salt as a seasoning.

## Recipes

**National Guard 7<sup>th</sup> Regiment Punch:**

(It was common to name punches in honor of military regiments)

Fill a large bar glass glass with shaved ice. Shake and mix thoroughly, then ornament with slices of orange, pineapple and berries in season, and dash with Jamaica rum. This delicious beverage should be imbibed through a straw.

**INGREDIENTS:**

One tablespoonful of sugar  
The juice of a quarter of a lemon  
One wineglass of brandy  
One wineglass of Catawba wine  
Flavor with raspberry syrup.

**Cabbage:**

Pick cabbages very clean, and wash them thoroughly; then look them over carefully again; quarter them if they are very large. Put them into a sauce-pan with plenty of boiling water; if any scum rises, take it off; put a large spoonful of salt into the sauce-pan, and boil them till the stalks feel tender. A young cabbage will take about twenty minutes or half an hour; when full grown, near an hour: see that they are well covered with water all the time, and that no smoke or dirt arises from stirring the fire. With careful management, they will look as beautiful when dressed as they did when growing.

**INGREDIENTS:**

1 cabbage  
water  
salt

### Roasted Duck:

After your ducks are cleaned, lay them in milk and water for at least three hours before they are cooked, which will in a great measure draw out the strong taste. Wipe them dry with a cloth, season them sufficiently with salt and pepper, and put into each a minced onion, with two or three minced sage leaves, a very little mace and a spoonful of red wine. Roast them before a brisk fire, basting them occasionally with lard. When nearly done, dredge them lightly with flour, and continue to baste them till done. Serve them up with slices of lemon or some other nice fruit, laid round. Make gravy of the giblets, a little butter, flour, cayenne pepper, nutmeg and lemon pickle; put a few spoonfuls over the ducks, and serve the rest in a boat. Accompany them with stewed cranberries, cherries or peaches and rice.

#### INGREDIENTS:

Ducks  
Salt  
Pepper  
1 minced onion per duck  
2-3 minced sage leaves (1-2 tsp. dried sage)  
1/8 tsp. mace  
1 tbs. port wine  
Lard for basting

#### Gravy:

Duck giblets, minced  
Butter  
Flour  
Cayenne pepper  
Nutmeg, grated  
Lemon pickle

### Corn Cake:

Add to a pint of sour milk: two cups of Indian meal, one of flour, one egg, two table-spoonfuls of molasses, a teaspoonful of salt and one of saleratus. Mix it thoroughly, and bake twenty-five minutes in two shallow pans, or thirty-five in a deep one.

#### INGREDIENTS:

1 pint sour milk (use buttermilk)  
2 c. corn ("Indian") meal  
1 c. flour  
1 egg  
2 tbs. molasses  
1 tsp. salt  
1 tsp. baking powder (saleratus is obsolete)

## CHRISTMAS DISHES

Slave cooks were well known for their rich foods, and would cook for their owner and his family and friends. Slave cooks cooked only for them, and were separate from the slaves that would cook for other slaves or their own families. They were allowed to use finer quality foods like choice cuts of meat, creams, and spices. Slave cooks were especially popular during Christmas week, when they would cook their finest dishes to please their owner's holiday guests. Christmas dishes would differ from their standard meals, and often times they would spend the entire week preparing Christmas dishes for Christmas day. Below are some of the traditional meals that slave cooks would prepare during the week of Christmas. Many African American families like to prepare one of them for their Christmas dinner as a reminder of their history and ancestors.

## Stack Cake:

Instructions:

Stack case is one of the more basic recipes, which doesn't even require a recipe. Stack case was just layers of cake that were spread with homemade jelly before being neatly stacked. The stacks were cut as thin as possible, because it is believed they taste better the more layers they include.

## Tea Cakes:

Instructions:

Sift the flour and then mix in the baking soda and salt. Separately, cream the butter and sugar together slowly and then add in the eggs, vanilla and nutmeg. Put in a mixer and slowly add in the flour mixture, and then slowly add in the sour cream. Mix until it's smooth and then roll out on a floured surface until it's about ½ inch thick. Gently place onto a non stick baking sheet and bake at 450 degrees for 11 minutes, or until lightly browned. Cut into small squares once it has cooled.

### INGREDIENTS:

3 ½ cups flour  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
½ teaspoon salt  
½ cup butter  
1 cup sugar  
2 eggs  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1/3 teaspoon nutmeg  
½ cup sour cream

## Molasses Pie:



Instructions:

Sift the flour and then mix in the other dry ingredients, all except for the baking soda. Add the baking soda to the milk and then mix in with the molasses. And the dry mix in to the milk mix slowly while blending together. Add the eggs and melted butter and blend thoroughly. Pour the mix into the pie shell and bake at 375 degrees until the pie begins to

brown lightly. Reduce the heat to 275 degrees to prevent the pie shell from further browning, and continue until the filling has become firm and does not stick to the edge of a knife.

### INGREDIENTS:

½ cup flour  
½ teaspoon allspice  
¾ teaspoon cinnamon  
½ teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
1 cup sour milk  
¾ cup molasses  
2 eggs  
2 tablespoons melted butter  
9 inch unbaked pie shell (pre-made or homemade)

## Twelfth Night or King's Cake:

Take 6 cups sifted flour, and put it in a large mixing bowl. Make a hole in the center of the flour, and put in a half-ounce of yeast, dissolved in a little warm water. Add the 2 cups milk. Knead and mix the flour with one hand, while adding the milk with the other. In another bowl, combine remaining 2 cups flour with the salt; set aside. In another mixing bowl, beat eggs with butter and sugar until light. Add to dough, kneading lightly with your hands, and adding more eggs if the dough is a little stiff. Let the dough rise until doubled in bulk, then add the reserved flour and salt. Knead the dough by turning it over on itself three times and set to rise again, covered with a cloth for about an hour. Take it up and work again lightly, and then form into a ring.

This is a large amount of dough, so it may be divided and baked in two or more King's Cakes. Pat gently and flatten a little. Have ready a greased parchment paper or silpat-lined baking pan, and set the ring in the middle. Cover the pan with a clean cloth, and set the cake to rise for an hour longer. When well risen, glaze the loaves lightly with a beaten egg. Place in 325° oven; let bake for 1 to 1 1/2 hours, or less if making smaller loaves. Decorate with colored icings and decorator candies, as desired.

### INGREDIENTS:

8 cups of all-purpose flour, sifted  
6 eggs  
1 cup granulated sugar  
1 pound butter or shortening  
2 cups whole milk, scalded then cooled to lukewarm  
1/2 ounce yeast (2 1/4-ounce packages, or about 4 1/2 tsp)  
2 teaspoons salt  
Candies to decorate



### Notes:

Traditionally, a bean or coin was hidden in the batter and the individual who found it in their slice was proclaimed king or queen of the feast that evening. In America, the item was usually some sort of gold or diamonds, but during the hardships of the Civil War, the jewels were replaced with pecans, beans, or coins.

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