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## HOT SCONES, PLEASE!

**S**CONES, especially hot, have always been most popular with New Zealanders. We like them for breakfast; and simply love them for morning tea; we serve them at luncheon, afternoon tea, and at supper. We make them round, or square, or oblong, little and dainty for parties, and big and hearty for families; at harvesting and shearing time, the housewife makes them almost by the hundredweight, and considers them indispensable. There are many varieties, plain and fancy. They have held their own against the bid for favour made by gems and pikelets. In fact, scones and sponges are really characteristic of New Zealand.

But there is a knack in making a good scone, and it isn't everyone who has it. Here is what a Te Awamutu Link in the Daisy Chain says:—

### The First Essential

"A hot oven is the first essential—about 475deg. to 500deg. Having made scones since I was 10 years old—I am now 68—I feel I can help the young marrieds, although they have every easy way to bake. I baked for years in a camp oven! I use many scone recipes, but mix them only the one way—the way my mother taught me—whatever the recipe says. I always melt the butter (now "shortening")—then fill up the cup with liquid, and drop in one egg, unbeaten, and mix into the dry ingredients very quickly. I find speed to get them in the hot oven after mixing is **THE SECRET** of success. Also, although I know few do this, I always put my scones *close together*—in fact, **TOUCHING**. In this way they rise more quickly. I never use cutters, just a knife, and if I want round scones, I form them with my hands."

### An American Way

The Te Awamutu Link goes on to say: "An American nurse gave me a recipe exactly the same as my own plain scone mixture, using baking powder instead of baking soda and cream of tartar, **BUT** the rising agent was dissolved in milk and water, and stirred in while effervescing. These scones were quite good, but I like my own way best; and I just pass on this Yankee method in case anyone else would like to try it."

The Americans do make many delicious and varied kinds of hot "biscuits" as they call scones, as well as fancy breads and rolls.

### Plain Scones

Two cups of flour; 1 tablespoon of butter, dripping, or lard; 1 teaspoon of baking soda; 2 teaspoons of cream of tartar; ¼ teaspoon of salt; and milk and water to mix—about 1 cup. Sift the dry ingredients, rub in the fat, and lightly mix with the liquid to a soft dough. Roll out, lightly cut in either rounds or squares with a cutter or a knife. Brush over with milk (optional). Bake from 7 to 10 minutes in a quick oven, 475deg. to 500deg. The time for baking depends on the thickness of the scones.

This plain scone recipe is very reliable indeed. I have used it for years, and it never fails.

Using the plain scone mixture, the addition of the following will make:—

*For Date Scones*—add 1 tablespoon of sugar, and 1 cup of chopped dates.

*For Sultan Scones*—add 1 tablespoon of sugar, and 1 tablespoon of desiccated coconut, and 1 cup of sultanas.

*For Cheese Scones*—add cayenne pepper, 1 cup of grated cheese, and a little dry mustard.

### Pumpkin Scones

Beat 1 good tablespoon of butter with ½ cup of sugar, and 1 well-beaten egg, then 1 cup of well-mashed dry pumpkin. A wet pumpkin is not successful. Then add 2¼ cups of flour sifted with 1½ teaspoons of soda and 3 flat teaspoons of cream of tartar. Mix with lukewarm milk to the usual scone consistency. Bake in a hot oven. If cut into rounds, they look very attractive, and are a pretty colour.

## CALM COOKING DESPITE POWER-CUTS

Use a hay box intelligently, and the power-cuts need not affect your cooking—except roasts or cakes. The use of the hay box or fireless cooker was revived in Britain during the war, when gas, electricity and other fuel were often so terribly scarce. It is a very simple affair, and simply acts on the principle of the thermos flask. The essential feature is that the food must have *started cooking* before being put into the hay-box, where it will remain at the temperature already attained, for several hours—just like the tea in your thermos.

### How to Make

Get a box, or boxes, or perhaps a trunk with a well-fitting lid. Line it with several thicknesses of newspaper, which are bad conductors of heat. Then fill the box with hay, packing it in very tightly, especially the corners. Then make "nests" for the saucepans you are using—perhaps a big one containing corned beef or ham, or a shoulder piece of bacon; or a pot or stew with vegetables; or soup; or even a pot-roast. Haricot beans are often done this way—and porridge may be cooked overnight and put into the hay-box ready for early breakfast. After putting in your pots, cover them with a thick cushion of hay, tuck in with an old rug or blanket, and close the box-lid, which is also thickly lined with newspaper. When mealtime comes, the saucepan of food must be taken out and put on the stove to re-heat, and for the stew to be thickened.

Experience will give you the knack of using the hay-box. As an extra precaution, wrap the saucepan round with newspaper when taking it off the stove to put into the hay-box.

### What—No Hay?

People living in a city may wonder how to get the hay. They might be interested to know that in France hay is never used for this purpose, but is replaced by sawdust. The results are wonderful. Sawdust is a very good insulating agent, and is used in the tropics mixed

(continued on next page)