

## HOT CROSS BUNS

I HOPE all Listener readers will get this copy in time to do their Easter baking beforehand, so that they may have a free time during the holidays. The Simnel Cake and the Shortbread will keep well; the Hot Cross Buns can be made on the Thursday afternoon, and hidden away until early on Good Friday morning, when they can be popped in the oven for a few minutes before breakfast.

### Hot Cross Buns

These are quite easy to make. The actual mixing takes very little time, and they "carry on" by themselves during their two rising periods, leaving you free to do other work.

First mix together an ounce packet of compressed yeast and a teaspoon of sugar until they liquefy, then add a teacup of lukewarm milk ( $\frac{1}{4}$  pint). Have ready 4oz. of sifted flour in a large mixing bowl, and pour the yeast mixture into it. Mix to a smooth batter, cover with a cloth, and stand in a warm place for  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour. Meanwhile, sift into another bowl  $1\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. flour, 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon grated nutmeg,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon each of ground cloves and ginger. Rub into this 5oz. of butter, add 4 or 5oz. castor sugar (you can roll ordinary sugar fine, if no castor), a little shredded candied peel, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. currants, and mix well.

When the yeast mixture in the big bowl is ready, gradually stir into it the second mixture, adding also a beaten egg, and another  $\frac{1}{2}$  pint of lukewarm milk. Mix all lightly and beat well. Cover the bowl with a cloth and leave in a warm place until it swells to double its size—perhaps  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours. Then turn on to a floured board and divide into 36 little portions. Work each into a smooth bun shape, and place on lightly greased and floured oven shelves leaving space between each to allow for rising. Mark a cross on each bun, cover with a cloth, and leave in a warm place till they double their size—about 20 minutes. Bake in hot oven, about 20 to 25 minutes. Brush over with a glaze made by dissolving 1 tablespoon castor sugar in 2 tablespoons milk, and return to the oven for a minute or two.

### Simnel Cake

Here is the real Gloucestershire recipe for this traditional Easter cake. We can use mock almond paste quite well if necessary this year, although I still see the good kind for sale in some grocers' shops, made up in pounds just like butter. Six ounces butter, 6oz. castor sugar, 8oz. flour, 4 eggs,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. sultanas, currants and peel mixed,  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. raisins (if unobtainable, must use sultanas),  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon mixed spice,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon baking powder. Cream butter and sugar well, add eggs one at a time, beating well and adding also the sifted flour and spice, little by little, to prevent curdling. Stir in the fruit as lightly as possible. Bake in a well-lined and greased cake-tin, in moderate oven, about 2 hours. Cool on rack. Next day, split open through the middle, and

spread each cut half thinly with apricot jam. Roll out half your almond paste to fit the cake, and put it as layer between the two halves, joining them together again. Brush top of cake over thinly with apricot jam, and cover with another layer of almond paste. Brush over with a little beaten egg-yolk, and return to the oven for a few minutes to brown slightly. When cold, cover the centre of the cake with a little soft white icing, in which any suitable decorations may be set—fluffy Easter chicks, and an empty eggshell filled with small, short-stemmed flowers—in England they use spring flowers such as primroses.

### Scottish Shortbread

(1) Here is a good one—from the Kilrenny Women's Institute. One pound flour, 9oz. butter, 2 yolks of eggs, 5oz. sugar, a little essence of vanilla. Put all ingredients into a bowl, and knead well until the butter absorbs the flour, etc. Do not use any more moisture. Make into two round, flat cakes, pinch around the edges, and bake very slowly for 30 minutes. (2) This one is from the Borthwick Women's Institute. Six ounces flour, 2oz. rice flour or ground rice, 2oz. castor sugar,  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. butter. Cream butter and sugar, then gradually add flour and rice flour (which have been mixed together), knead into smooth ball, and roll to a quarter of an inch in thickness, and pinch edges. Bake in a moderate oven for half an hour. Leave on tray until cold.

## FROM THE MAIL BAG

### A Red Ink Stain

Dear Aunt Daisy,

My husband has somehow managed to get a big red ink stain on the collar of his greatcoat. Could you tell me how to remove it, please?—"A Soldier's Wife" (Christchurch).

Red ink is a tricky thing to deal with. Try soaking the stain in methylated spirits (the clear kind, bought from the chemist), and add a few drops of ammonia to the methylated spirits. After five minutes, wash slowly in a thick solution of soap (soap jelly), and rinse in lukewarm water.

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