

WE have pleasure in placing before listeners this unique series of articles by Mr. Frank Hilton, who has operated in Wellington City successfully for quite a number of years, at one time owning and controlling a chain of shops. He also held important positions with leading catering firms in the Old Country. Original recipes, compiled by one with the experience possessed by Mr. Hilton, are indeed rare, and we are sure they will find favour with our readers. They are, in the main, a reproduction of talks broadcast from 2VA.



The Heat of Ovens.

NOW a hint or two about the heat of ovens. Some of our more fortunate listeners may have thermometers or pyrometers on their ovens; others have to rely more or less on their own judgment. I find a good plan of working a strange oven is to throw a sprinkling of flour on the oven shelf, close the door and see how long it takes to brown nicely. If it browned up nicely in, say, one minute, then I knew the oven was about right for scones.

Another way is just to drop a few spots of water on the shelf while it is in the oven and watch if it sizzles up nicely, then the oven is right.

Should you require date scones, stone the dates with moistened fingers, then add them to the mixture after the dough is made and before it is rolled out. On no account must any fruit be mixed with the dry flour, as if this is done the dates turn dry and hard, and are bound to show white flour on their skins somewhere. When baking scones remove them from the oven immediately they are cooked. If the oven is right they should be a nice golden brown, equal colour top and bottom, with a very fine crust, transparent, if possible, when cut off. The interior should be as nearly like a honeycomb or sponge as possible.

Leaving scones in the oven to brown after they are cooked through can only be done at the expense of texture and flavour.

Remember: Mixture right and oven right, and you have a perfect article.

Sponge Sandwich.

SPONGE cake, like any other kind of cake, varies very much according to the fancy of the makers. Like the scones, there are many kinds. Sponge cake is the lightest kind of cake within the scope of every-day cookery; it is also the most wholesome and easily digested of cakes. It lends itself to almost any kind of filling and sandwiching, and also icing and fancy decorating. It is easily made. An oven of only moderate heat is needed, but for best results the oven must be what we call solid; this means it must not fluctuate in the slightest: no putting on a bit more wood to touch it up a bit, or turning on the gas whilst sponges are in the oven. An ideal oven for a really exhibition sponge is an electric oven. But I have seen many exhibition sponges made in ordinary stove ovens. The electric oven, however, has the advantage that the heat is absolutely uniform, which is so necessary to sponge cakes. Of course, I know that all of you do not have electric ovens, but if you will follow my directions closely you will be able to make a very good job under most ordinary conditions. Now for our sponge sandwich recipe:—

Ingredients: Four whole, good-sized hen eggs, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. flour, $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. cream of tartar and soda baking powder.

Method: Weigh the flour and powder into the sieve I told you about previously. Pass them through several times to thoroughly mix the powder. You may not have weights small enough to weigh quarter of an ounce of baking powder; if you haven't, take one penny and halfpenny for weights, this will give you half an ounce. Put the half-ounce of powder on the table and divide it equally in halves with a knife; this will give you $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. of powder, or near enough.

Now we come to the actual making of the sponge sandwich: Crack the four whole eggs into a mixing bowl, add the $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. sugar slightly warmed in the oven or on the stove. The warmed sugar will enable you to beat up with much less effort. Now beat eggs and sugar together until the sugar is dissolved or until the mixture doubles itself in volume. It is then ready for the sifted flour to be gently stirred in; and your sponge is ready for the oven. This recipe and method gives you a good wholesome sponge cake fit for healthy school children's lunches and picnics.

SHOULD you require a butter sponge, put, say $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. butter to melt to a liquid in a cup or tin, and after you have mixed your sponge and the flour is all incorporated, pour in your hot melted butter and stir it gently into the mixture. Do not let it get cold, and do not toughen it by beating. Spread it out quickly in your sandwich tins and bake straight away, as if the butter sets in the mixture it will prevent it rising in the oven. A good plan with sponges is to keep everything nice and warm.

Using Tins.

NOW a few hints about tins. The mixture I have given makes about $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of cake. The ordinary home-made sponge sandwich weighs about $\frac{1}{2}$ lb., so you will see there are two tins to have ready. Many people have trouble with sponge cakes sticking to the tins: this is caused either by improper greasing or undissolved sugar grains in the mixture, or probably not a very good bottom heat in your oven. All tins should be greased with hot beef dripping, put on with a brush; an ordinary glue brush I find the best for greasing tins, as this stands the hot fat and will last a lifetime. After the tins are greased, sprinkle them with dry flour over the greased part, and then give them a tap on the table; sufficient will be left sticking to the tin to give the crust of the finished article that beautiful smooth finish so much desired.

Should your oven have too much bottom heat cut a piece of parchment or butter paper the same size as the sandwich tin, place it inside the sandwich tin, and pour your mixture on top of the paper. This can easily be peeled off when the cake is cold, and will stop the bottom from being too brown. Unless your oven has an excessive bottom heat avoid sandwich tins with a beaded edge at the bottom, as the air cavity underneath the tin will certainly give you a very pale crust and probably result in sticking. All tins must lie flat and come in direct contact with the oven shelf.

Baking the Sponge.

NOW for a few hints on baking: We are right after that golden brown again. Do not move a sponge until it is set; this does not mean cooked. You may turn it after it is set. The way to tell if your sponge is cooked is just to press your finger in the centre and lift it off again quickly. If the cake springs back like a sponge, then it is cooked; if the dent stops in, leave it in the oven a little longer. No exact time can be given for baking, as ovens and mixtures vary. If your mixture comes up and then sinks down again, your mixture is either too light or unevenly balanced, probably too much sugar. If it does not come up enough it is not aerated enough or is toughened or chilled in the mixing.

Now, follow these directions and you will be sure to get something usable. One thing is certain: you will not absolutely spoil anything. You may not make an exhibition sponge the first time, but whatever your efforts, the result will at least be edible and not wasted. Now a word or two about fillings. I will just deal with one or two, as fillings and decorations would take a whole article and will be dealt with at some future date. Of course, in this cow country there is the whipped cream, everybody knows how to do that—its chief drawback is that it won't keep, and most of our country folk are well tired of it, so try this one, raspberry cream filling: 3oz. of icing sugar, 2oz. butter; beat up to a cream, then add about 1oz. of pure raspberry jam and a pinch of tartaric acid. The acid is not absolutely necessary, but it gives a sharp fruity flavour and brings out the raspberry flavour in the mixture. Spread this on your sandwich and you have an excellent filling that will keep fresh for several days. Another good filling is coffee cream filling: Take 3oz. icing sugar, 2oz. butter; beat them up to a cream, then add some coffee essence to taste; any well-known brand will do. You should get a nice brown cream, smooth eating and of good keeping quality.

Now for the finishing or decorating. Space permits me to deal with one, so we will take the humble passion fruit icing. Put the required amount of icing sugar in a basin, say about 4oz., cut the passion fruit in two, scoop the contents into the icing sugar, then add very slowly some boiling water to make into a nice smooth icing; put in a pinch of tartaric acid to enhance the flavour of the passion fruit, then spread whilst still warm on your sandwich, and you have the finished article.

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