

RECIPE FROM THE HISTORIC KITCHEN

SCOTCH SHORTBREAD, No. 3

Five Roses Cook Book (Winnipeg and Montreal: Lake of the Woods Milling Company, 1915), page 115.

$\frac{1}{4}$ pound fresh butter
2 ounces fine sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce cornstarch
6 ounces *Five Roses* flour

Knead cornstarch and sugar into the butter, then gradually knead in flour. Roll out into a round. Pinch the edges with fore-finger and thumb, prick over top with fork, cut in eight. Place on baking dish and bake in moderate oven 20 minutes. Leave on tin to harden."

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

This recipe for **Scotch Shortbread** is third in a group of three. Shortbread started as a cake made with very fine oatmeal or barley flour in Scotland sometime in the late 18th century. As refined white wheat flour started to be readily available to Scottish cooks, they substituted it for the oatmeal and barley. It was first mentioned in print in the April 1801 issue of *The Farmer's Magazine*, published in Edinburgh. A basic Scottish shortbread has consisted ever since then of white flour, butter and sugar. A further refinement happened in the mid-19th century when some cooks used a little bit of cornstarch or rice flour instead, which made for an even crisper texture. A good shortbread is indeed "short", meaning brittle and crumbly. As a baking term **short** first appeared in an English manuscript of 1430. **Pinch[ing] the edge with fore-finger and thumb** and then **prick[ing] over [the]top with [a] fork** are traditional embellishments going back to at least the 1830s.

The *Five Roses Cook Book* was one of the most successful Canadian cookery books, and one of the very first that featured a Canadian brand name product. Five Roses Flour is still available in Canadian stores. Many of the recipes were submitted by ordinary Canadians, and so include their name, although this recipe is not attributed.

OUR MODERN EQUIVALENT

This shortbread is deliciously buttery and firm, although it is properly "short" too. We find the recipe doubles, triples and even quadruples very easily. If you wish, instead of shaping into the traditional round cookie, you can press the raw dough into square baking pans and cut the baked dough into small squares. This shortbread is meant to be ever so slightly golden, so don't overbake it. Also, make sure you really prick it well (as much as 50 times!) to allow the inner moisture to escape. The secret to this recipe is that dryness and also the substitution of a small amount of flour by cornstarch.

125	mL	sweet butter, at room temperature	½	cup
30	mL	cornstarch	2	Tbsps
65	mL	white sugar, run through food processor	3	cup
175	mL	white all-purpose flour	¾	cup

Cream: butter until soft

Blend: cornstarch and sugar into creamed butter

Blend: in flour gradually to form a soft dough

Knead: gently on floured surface until smooth, about 20 seconds

Roll out: dough into a circle of 15 cm or (6")

Pinch: edges with forefinger and thumb to create a scalloped effect

Place: circle on an unbuttered baking sheet

Prick: *a lot* all over with a fork

Score: circle into 8 wedges

Bake: in a moderate oven, 150°C (325°F), for 18 to 20 minutes, or until very lightly coloured

Cut: gently into 8 wedges along score lines while still warm

Leave: to cool completely on tin

Yield: 8 wedges of shortbread

November 1998 a:\FIVE ROSES\shortbread 3

 **TORONTO Culture**
Spadina Historic House & Gardens

All rights reserved. Permission is required to reprint.