



Corn Bread – A Piece of History!

Baking provides a wonderful opportunity to explore the history and traditions of favorite foods. Breads nourish families all over the world. Early corn breads were baked in open fires and on stones. Much later, colonists used griddles or Dutch ovens. Let's make corn bread and experience making a simple daily bread that the pioneers and early settlers enjoyed!

BAKING PROJECT: Making Corn Bread or Muffins

MATERIALS/EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

- Book— *Prairie Day*. Adapted from The Little House Books. Laura Ingalls Wilder. 1997.
- Copy of recipe: Corn Bread
- Two medium mixing bowls
- Stirring spoons
- Fork for mixing
- 9-inch square or round baking pan or 12-cup medium muffin pan
- Liquid measuring cup
- Dry measuring cups and spoons
- Pot holders
- Ingredients for Corn Bread

ACTIVITIES:

- Read together a suggested book.
- Make Homemade Butter to go with the cornbread
- Read the recipe together.
- Review how to wash hands and do so before starting to cook.
- Assign an ingredient and amount for each family member to measure
- Instead of using the recipe prepare cornbread as directed on a package mix or self-rising cornmeal. Learn new skills by making the cornbread from scratch using the recipe.

BAKING ACTIVITY:

Cornmeal Muffins or Cornbread

Makes 12 muffins, squares or wedges

Ingredients:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup cornmeal, white or yellow
- 1 egg
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil or melted butter
- 1 cup low-fat or skim milk

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.
2. Grease bottom and sides of a 9-inch square or round pan OR 12-cup muffin pan.
3. In a medium-sized bowl, mix together the dry ingredients: flour, cornmeal, baking powder, sugar and salt.
4. In a separate bowl or large measuring cup, beat the egg with a fork or whisk. Add the oil or melted butter and milk, beating well.
5. Add the egg mixture to the dry ingredients and mix only until dry ingredients are combined. Do not over mix; the batter does not need to be smooth.
6. Pour batter into the greased pan or muffin cups. Bake 18 to 20 minutes for muffins or 25 to 30 minutes for 9-inch square or round pan. Remove from the oven when golden brown (Toothpick inserted in center should come out clean.)

Source: Home Baking Association. Baking For Success Lesson. www.homebaking.org.

BAKE FOR FAMILY FUN EXPLORATION:

1. How do you think butter was invented?

“Legend has it that the Arabs discovered butter by accident. They loaded skins full of milk on their camels, and as the camels moved slowly across the desert, their rolling gait churned the milk into delicious butter.” (Cooking Wizardry for Kids)

2. What did pioneer children do all day?

*Mary Gunderson writes in **Pioneer Farm Cooking, Family Chores, p. 18:** “Tending a pioneer farm was hard work. Pioneers grew much of the food they ate and made many household items such as soap and furniture from scratch. All members of the family had to pitch in and help get chores done.*

...Children on a pioneer farm had chores every day. The older children watched the younger children while their mother baked. Often the children helped weed the garden, water and feed the animals, and churn butter.”

3. How did they get the cream out of the milk to churn it into butter?

The cream is the fat in whole milk. It weighs less than the rest of the milk and rises to the top. They could “skim” it off the top of the milk. That is why milk with all the cream or fat taken out is called “skim milk.”

4. How is butter made?

Mary Gunderson, *Pioneer Farm Cooking* continues:

Churning Butter: “Pioneers made butter from cream. Most pioneers made their butter in a wooden churn. These churns were about 3 feet tall and about 1 foot wide. A butter churn had a stick called a dasher that stuck out of the lid...Pioneers pulled, pushed and rotated the dasher repeatedly until chunks of fat separated from the cream. The average churning time was 35 minutes. Pioneers removed the butter from the churn and kneaded it with a wooden paddle. They rinsed the butter with cold water until the water ran clear. If the buttermilk was not completely washed off, the butter soured within a few days.

5. Let's make butter!

Homemade Butter

Makes ¼ cup butter

Ingredients:

- 1 cup (8 oz. carton) heavy whipping cream, room temperature
- 1 clean jar with lid that seals—about 1 pint (16 oz.) size
- 4-5 clean marbles
- ¼ teaspoon salt

Directions:

- Pour the heavy cream into the clean jar and drop in the marbles. Screw on the lid tightly. (A lid that has a rubber ring inside the lid, such as a small jam jar, is great.)
- Everyone shake! Let each family member shake for one minute. Keep shaking until small clumps begin to form, about 20 minutes. The clump of butter will form in the bottom with the “buttermilk” on top.
- Pour off the buttermilk. Use a large spoon or spatula to press out any additional buttermilk. Rinse the butter one or two times with very cold water. Sprinkle with about ½ teaspoon salt to season it. Mold with clean hands into a ball and serve or refrigerate.

6. More information:

Be sure to check out these great resources on the main Bake for Fun Month web site:

- Eating Together
- The Thrill of Skill
- Ten Tips for Baking Success
- Safe Kitchen Check List
- <http://www.homebaking.org/familyfun/>

VOCABULARY:

Churn: the container in which butter is made 2. to make butter

Cornucopia: a container in the shape of a horn overflowing with fruits and flowers used as a symbol of plenty.

Cream: the fat in whole milk

Dutch Oven: cast iron pot with a lid, hung over an open fire or in the hearth

BOOKS FOR READING TOGETHER:

Prairie Day. Adapted from The Little House Books. Laura Ingalls Wilder. 1997.

Pioneer Farm Cooking. Mary Gunderson. www.historycooks.com

Source: Home Baking Association *Baking for Success* video & lesson guide.

www.homebaking.org