

Heritage Recipes

You can share old family recipes and traditions

Depression Cake

From Eva

The Depression Cake recipe is exactly as I wrote it down from Mom, who simply read it from her memory, she didn't list the ingredients first, just started in with what you put into the pan and when!

This cake is from my mother who lived through the depression, and told stories of that time. She worked for a dollar a day, cleaning barns and milking cows, or later chambermaiding in the rooming house. There she got room and board plus the dollar. She said she got the recipe from the Home Loving Hearts page in I believe it was the Country Gentleman magazine or the Western Producer or possibly the Family Herald . This page was a recipe exchange page, and a lot of people became pen pals from exchanging the recipes. This would have been during the deep depression in the late 1920's and early 1930's.

Put into a largish saucepan, 2 cups of brown sugar (light brown well packed into the cup) 2 cups hot water, 4 tablespoons of lard (she used bacon grease a lot since its basically lard and she didn't have to pay extra for the grease having already paid for the bacon), 1 pound of raisins, 1 teaspoon of salt (omit if using bacon grease) 2 teaspoons of cinnamon, 1/2 teaspoon of cloves (since I and my brother didn't like cloves she would use ginger and nutmeg instead).

Boil until melted and well mixed, stirring occasionally. when cold add 2 teaspoons of soda (Cow brand was her choice) dissolved in 1 tablespoon of lukewarm water. Add 3 scant cups of flour (to scant a cup of anything, take out 1 tablespoon) (again Robin Hood was her flour of choice and all purpose was best).

Bake in 2 loaves, at 300 F, for 1 3/4 hours or until a broom straw inserted int he center comes out clean. (I now use a thin bamboo skewer instead of the broom straw.)

In the 1960's she discovered that a really oily brand of peanut butter (Sunny Jim) would substitute nicely for the lard, she would use 1/2 to 1 cup of the peanut butter depending on how much oil was in it. (I use up the leftover peanut butter

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from Kraft, you can use smooth or crunchy as long as its not rancid.) Again omit the salt if using peanut butter as its usually salty enough.

Variations: dates (cut up first) currents, nuts, prunes (dried) chopped dried fruits or peel, can also be used in place of the raisins.

I doubling you need a 4 quart Dutch oven to mix the cake in. It will make 2 large cake tins (sheet cakes) in 9 by 13 inch pans, bake if about an hour before testing as it will cook a bit faster in the thinner pans.

We used to eat a large chunk of this with coffee for breakfast and go all day until lunch time without feeling hungry! This by the way was never iced, she didn't believe in icing fruit cake and she considered it a fruit cake.

Variations

2 c shredded apples

2 c shredded carrots

1 can whole cranberry sauce

1 bag whole ground fresh cranberries

2 c mashed bananas

2 c fresh peaches

1 3/4 c applesauce plus 1/4 c pineapple

2 c shredded zucchini

1 3/4 c applesauce plus 1/4 c raisins

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