

T H E
PRESIDENTS'
COOKBOOK

*Practical Recipes
from George Washington
to the Present*

BY

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&

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THE WIDOW JOHNSTON'S HASTY PUDDING

A year after Nancy Hanks' death, Lincoln's father married Sarah Bush Johnston, a widow with three children of her own. A kindly, warm-hearted woman, she made the desolate Lincoln cabin as cheery and orderly as possible. Although the table she set was necessarily plain and spare, she was a good cook of simple foods. Her hasty pudding, much loved by young Abe, was not so hastily cooked as to be indigestible, which is more than could be said for many a hasty pudding of that era. A recipe of the time decried the habit of certain careless cooks who made hasty pudding "just as wanted and bringing it to the table with about fifteen minutes cooking. In this way the meal is not thoroughly cooked and therefore was said to disagree with many persons. A cast-iron pot with feet lessens the tendency to burn and is therefore the best vessel to use." (This applied to fireplace cooking.) The Widow Johnston's mush, or hasty pudding, was smooth, delicate, and without lumps. Her trick, probably, was to stir the cornmeal into cold water before adding it to hot water.

<i>Hot water</i>	<i>Salt</i>
<i>Yellow or white cornmeal</i>	<i>Cold water</i>

Boil 3 cups water in a saucepan. Mix 1 cup packaged yellow or white cornmeal and 1 teaspoon salt with 1 cup cold water. Mix well. Slowly pour the mixture into the boiling water, stirring all the while. Cook until thickened, stirring often. When thick, cover and continue cooking over very low heat (or in a double boiler) for another 10 minutes. *Serves 6.*

(We recommend doubling the quantity needed and pouring the leftover mush into a long glass baking dish to be stored in the refrigerator for another day. The then-solid mush may be cut into thin slices, fried in bacon drippings, and eaten crisp and hot with butter and syrup. Double-duty dish.)

RAIL SPLITTERS

Named for our sixteenth President, these corn muffins are delicious served hot with gobs of butter on top.

<i>Egg</i>	<i>Buttermilk</i>
<i>Sugar</i>	<i>Soda</i>
<i>Salt</i>	<i>Water</i>
<i>Yellow cornmeal</i>	<i>Flour</i>
<i>Melted shortening</i>	<i>Baking powder</i>

Beat 1 egg well and add to it 3 tablespoons sugar, 1 teaspoon salt, and 1 cup yellow cornmeal. Mix well and slowly add 4 tablespoons melted shortening that

has been allowed to cool somewhat. Mix again and add 1 cup fresh buttermilk. Beat all together. Dissolve $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda in 1 teaspoon cold water and add to the other mixture. Sift in 1 cup flour, previously sifted with 4 teaspoons baking powder. Beat vigorously. Grease well iron cornbread-stick pans and heat them to the sizzling point (use cup cake tins if you don't have stick pans). Pour batter in immediately. Bake in a preheated medium-hot (375° F.) oven for approximately 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Serve piping hot. *Makes 24.*

NANCY HANKS' STEAMED POTATOES

When the Lincoln family moved from Kentucky to Indiana and lived near Little Pigeon Creek in the Buckhorn Valley, there were many times they had literally nothing but potatoes to eat. In *The Prairie Years* Carl Sandburg described one of those lean occasions:

Once at the table when there was only potatoes, the father spoke a blessing to the Lord for potatoes. The boy [Abe] answered, "These are mighty poor blessings."

Poor they were, but Nancy Hanks Lincoln always tried to make the potatoes as tasty as possible by steaming them in a baker, as was the custom then.

<i>Potatoes</i>	<i>Pepper</i>
<i>Salt</i>	<i>Butter</i>
<i>Water</i>	<i>Buttermilk</i>

Use good medium-sized potatoes, not too young. (If too young, they will taste soapy instead of mealy.) Scrub the potatoes well, allowing two per person. These are delicious steamed in a Dutch oven over the embers at a cookout, but also good prepared in a Dutch oven on top of the stove. Pile the potatoes into the Dutch oven, along with 1 cup well-salted water. Put the lid on upside down. Inside the lid place several pieces of glowing charcoal. Put the Dutch oven (or large kettle) on very low heat on top of the stove or in the oven. Allow to steam slowly for about 1 hour or until potatoes are tender. Do not lift the lid unless absolutely necessary. *To serve:* bring the Dutch oven to the table. Serve the potatoes in their jackets, along with salt, pepper, and butter. To be authentically Lincolnesque, you should serve a mug of fresh buttermilk with the potatoes.

DELMONICO POTATOES

In 1861 President Lincoln visited the uptown Delmonico's in New York. It was quite a ride uptown—way up to 14th Street and Fifth Avenue. The President's

Mix together 1 cup sugar, 2½ tablespoons flour, and ¼ teaspoon salt. Add 1 quart well-washed blackberries. Mix well and pour into a pie plate lined with unbaked pastry shell. Cover the top with another crust and make gashes to let the steam escape. Bake in a hot (450° F.) oven 10 minutes, then reduce temperature to 350° F. and continue baking another 25 to 30 minutes. *Makes 1 nine-inch pie shell.*

To make sour-cherry pie: Substitute 1 quart sour red cherries for the blackberries (having washed and pitted them) and proceed as above.

GOOSEBERRY COBBLER

Elderberries, gooseberries—all the old-time berries and fruits found favor with President Lincoln. Such berries often grew wild in his home state of Illinois. The original recipe for this old-fashioned cobbler called for a dripping pan or 9-by-18-inch pudding dish, rather large for today's family. The recipe served 12, but can easily be adapted to 6 servings.

<i>Flour</i>	<i>Milk or water</i>
<i>Lard or salad oil</i>	<i>Sugar</i>
<i>Salt</i>	<i>Gooseberries</i>
<i>Baking powder</i>	

Combine 4 cups flour with 4 tablespoons melted lard or salad oil, ½ teaspoon salt, and 4 teaspoons baking powder. Mix as you would a biscuit dough, stirring in little by little about 1 cup milk or water. (Add only enough liquid to make a dough that can be rolled quite thin.) Roll the dough and line a pudding dish with it (or a 9-by-18-inch pan). Mix 2 tablespoons sugar with 3 tablespoons flour and sprinkle it over the crust. Then spread 6 cups washed gooseberries in the dish. Sprinkle with ¾ cup sugar (more if berries are too sour). Wet the edges of the crust with a little flour and water mixed. Place an upper crust on top, pressing the edges together. Make 2 openings by means of 2 inch-long incisions at right angles. Bake in a hot (425° F.) oven about 30 minutes. *To serve:* cut into squares and serve either warm or cold with rich milk or cream or whipped cream, vanilla sauce, foamy sauce, or vanilla ice cream.

LINCOLN'S FRUIT COOKIES

Psychologists might argue that Lincoln's excessive fondness for fruits was a result of his "deprived" childhood, with its fairly steady diet of potatoes and corn cakes and mush.

<i>Sugar</i>	<i>Nutmeg</i>
<i>Butter</i>	<i>Flour</i>
<i>Egg</i>	<i>Currants or raisins</i>
<i>Baking powder</i>	<i>Milk</i>

Combine 1½ cups sugar with 1 cup soft butter. Cream well, then add 1 slightly beaten egg. Add 2 teaspoons baking powder, 1 teaspoon grated nutmeg and just enough flour to make the dough rollable. Add 3 tablespoons English currants or chopped seedless raisins. Roll the dough smooth, cut with a large round cooky cutter, moisten the top of each cooky with milk, and sprinkle sugar over. Bake on well-greased cooky sheets in a hot (375° F.) oven. Cool on brown paper. *Makes 36 cookies.*

SPICED CRABAPPLES

Another Lincoln favorite, these apples were not a dessert, but a welcome accompaniment to a regular dinner or supper.

<i>Crabapples</i>	<i>Sugar</i>
<i>Vinegar</i>	<i>Cloves, mace, cinnamon</i>

Peel and cut in half 9 pounds crabapples. Place in a large kettle with 1 pint vinegar, 4 pounds sugar, 1 teaspoon whole cloves, 3 or 4 sticks of cinnamon, and a dash of mace. Boil about ½ hour, removing before the apples become too soft. Put in sterilized jars and seal or, if you plan to use shortly, chill in the refrigerator. *Makes 8 quarts.*

CONFEDERATE APPLE PIE WITHOUT APPLES

The Civil War created havoc with the traditionally rich Southern cooking. Although those in Washington were not noticeably deprived (note some of the White House menus for the period), and considering Lincoln's own Spartan tastes *he* certainly couldn't have cared less for himself, countrymen in the South were suffering from severe shortages of familiar foods. Witness the following recipes taken from *The Confederate Recipe Book*, subtitled "A Compilation of Over One Hundred Recipes Adapted to the Times."

<i>Crackers</i>	<i>Sugar</i>
<i>Water or milk</i>	<i>Butter</i>
<i>Tartaric acid</i>	<i>Nutmeg</i>

Making apple pie without apples isn't easy. But this is how it was done: Soak a large bowl of crackers in water or milk until all the crackers are soft and formless.

often all night long, "sweet scented the autumn darkness and done with the dawn."

Lincoln was not the only President with a yen for sorghum. Another border-state President, Harry Truman, had sorghum sent to him from Missouri during his sojourn at the White House.

<i>Butter</i>	<i>Nutmeg and cinnamon</i>
<i>Sugar</i>	<i>Soda</i>
<i>Egg</i>	<i>Baking powder</i>
<i>Sorghum syrup</i>	<i>Sour milk</i>
<i>Flour</i>	

Cream together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter and 1 cup sugar, slowly adding 1 slightly beaten egg and 1 cup sorghum syrup. Beat well. Then add to the mixture alternately 2 cups sifted flour mixed with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon each of nutmeg and cinnamon, 1 teaspoon each soda and baking powder, and 1 cup sour milk. When all are added, beat well again. Bake in a greased and floured loaf cake pan in a slow (325° F.) oven about 1 hour or until done. Cake may be frosted with any favorite icing.

YOUNG ABE'S GINGERBREAD MEN

In *The Prairie Years* Carl Sandburg tells the story of Lincoln and his sad gingerbread experience. During one of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, someone asked why Lincoln seemed to have so little female companionship. Did he find no pleasure in the company of women?

"When we lived in Indiana," the future President began, "once in a while my mother used to get some sorghum and ginger and make some gingerbread. It wasn't often, and it was our biggest treat. One day I smelled gingerbread and came into the house to get my share while it was hot. My mother had baked me three gingerbread men. I took them out under a hickory tree to eat them. There was a family, near us, poorer than we were, and their boy came along as I sat down. 'Abe,' he said, 'gimme a man?' I gave him one. He crammed it into his mouth in two bites and looked at me while I was biting the legs off of my first one. 'Abe,' he said, 'gimme that other'n?' I wanted it myself but I gave it to him. 'You seem to like gingerbread.' 'Abe,' he said, 'I don't s'pose anybody on earth likes gingerbread better'n I do—and gets less'n I do.'"

Our gingerbread men are the same in spirit as Abe's, though we have used molasses instead of sorghum, inasmuch as sorghum is unavailable in many parts of the country. The old recipes are not the same, to the nostalgic regret of old-timers who may remember them. Aside from the somewhat different flavor that sorghum imparts to the gingerbread men (it wasn't as sweet as today's molasses), the

old-fashioned soda was slightly different from today's. Never mind; gingerbread men are gingerbread men, and ever since the New York Dutch introduced them as a Christmas favorite they have remained so for generations of American children.

<i>Butter or margarine</i>	<i>Cloves</i>
<i>Sugar</i>	<i>Eggs</i>
<i>Molasses</i>	<i>Vinegar</i>
<i>Cinnamon</i>	<i>Flour</i>
<i>Ginger</i>	<i>Baking soda</i>
<i>Nutmeg</i>	

Cream 1 cup butter with 1 cup sugar. Add ½ cup dark molasses, along with 1 teaspoon each of ground cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and cloves. Mix well and pour into a saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. As mixture reaches the boil, remove from heat and cool to lukewarm. Then add 2 well-beaten eggs and 1 teaspoon vinegar. Mix well and add 5 cups flour sifted with 1 teaspoon baking soda. Mix again until mixture forms a smooth dough. Chill for several hours or overnight in the refrigerator. When ready to bake, roll out on floured board and cut with a gingerbread-man cutter. Put pieces of raisins on the cookies before baking—to form eyes, nose, buttons. Bake the cookies on ungreased cookie sheets in a preheated medium (350° F.) oven approximately 10 minutes. You may prefer to do all your decorating after the cookies are cooled. At that time, you may decorate with a thin frosting, making trimmings with a pastry tube. *Makes about 50 gingerbread men.*

HOT WATER SORGHUM GINGERBREAD

If you can find the sorghum, this is a real "oldie" worth trying. It may make you a convert to sorghum, as it did Lincoln.

<i>Shortening</i>	<i>Flour</i>
<i>Boiling water</i>	<i>Baking soda</i>
<i>Sorghum</i>	<i>Salt</i>
<i>Egg</i>	<i>Cinnamon, ginger, and cloves</i>

Melt ½ cup shortening in ⅔ cup boiling water. Then add 1 cup sorghum and 1 well-beaten egg. Sift together 2¾ cups flour, 2 teaspoons baking soda, 1 teaspoon salt, 1½ teaspoons ground ginger, 1 teaspoon cinnamon, and ¼ teaspoon cloves. Add to the sorghum mixture and mix thoroughly. Pour into a well-greased square baking pan and bake for about 30 minutes in a medium (350° F.) oven. Delicious when eaten warm. *Serves 8.*

GUNJERS (GUNYERS)

This molasses gingery cooky dates back way before Lincoln, back to earlier pioneer days. But it was "his kind of eatin'" all the same.

<i>Butter</i>	<i>Flour</i>
<i>Sugar</i>	<i>Allspice</i>
<i>Molasses</i>	<i>Cinnamon</i>
<i>Baking soda</i>	<i>Cloves and ginger</i>

Cream $\frac{2}{3}$ cup butter at room temperature with 1 cup sugar. Slowly add 1 cup molasses and mix well. Dissolve 1 tablespoon baking soda in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup warm water and set aside. Sift 6 cups flour with 2 teaspoons each allspice and cinnamon and 1 teaspoon each ground cloves and ginger. Add the soda-water mixture to the butter mixture alternately with the sifted dry ingredients. Mix well and refrigerate several hours or overnight. Roll very thin on a floured board and cut with cooky cutters into plain or fancy shapes. Bake in a preheated moderate (300° F.) oven until lightly browned, about 6 minutes. *Makes about 12 dozen.*

GINGER POUND CAKE

Another ginger treat for ginger lovers everywhere!

<i>Butter</i>	<i>Ginger</i>
<i>Sugar</i>	<i>Cinnamon</i>
<i>Eggs</i>	<i>Baking soda</i>
<i>Molasses</i>	<i>Orange rind</i>
<i>Flour</i>	

Cream $\frac{3}{4}$ pound butter with $\frac{3}{4}$ pound sugar. Add 6 lightly beaten eggs and 1 pint molasses. Slowly stir in $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds sifted flour mixed with 3 tablespoons ginger and 2 tablespoons cinnamon. Dissolve 1 tablespoon baking soda in a small amount of warm water and add it to the mixture. Add the grated rind of 3 medium oranges. Beat vigorously by hand or at top speed with an electric beater. Pour the mixture into a greased cake pan (preferably a heavy one). Bake in a moderate (350° F.) oven about 45 minutes or until done.

MOLASSES PECAN PIE

Speaking of molasses, the recipe book of a famous Washington baker of the last century records the fact that President Lincoln was one of the steadiest customers