

250 years of Recipe Cards

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The Moore-Morris
History and
Culture Center
WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TN

Recipe Card

Revolutionary "Fire Cake"

This recipe has been part of our history since the early 1700's and is known by several names: Muster Cake (1700's), Revolutionary "Fire Cake" (1775), and The Election Cake (1796).

The recipe found on the next page is credited to Amelia Simmons' "American Cookery," the first cookbook authored by an American.

This cake highlights the significance of each era through the use of costly spices like nutmeg, cinnamon, and mace. Originally, it was calorie-dense to fuel militia during the Muster Cake period, and later became a celebratory treat for the Fire Cake and Election Cake occasions.

Recipe Card

Revolutionary "Fire Cake"

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups of all- purpose flour
- ½ cup of softened butter
- 2 tsp of active dry yeast (*mixed with warm water and sugar*)
- 1 cup of warm whole milk
- 1 cup of brown sugar
- ½ cup of molasses
- 2 tsp of nutmeg, mace, and cinnamon
- 1 ½ cups of raisins and/or currents

DIRECTIONS:

Step One: Mix the warm milk, yeast, and a cup of flour. Let it sit for 30 minutes

Step Two: Beat the butter and sugar together until fluffy. Add the molasses and spices.

Step Three: Combine the yeast sponge with the butter mixture, then slowly fold in the remaining flour.

Step Four: Fold in your raisins or currants.

Step Five: Pour into a bundled or deep round pan. Bake at 175°C (350°F) for about 45–55 minutes.

Option to add icing at the end!

Recipe Card

Frontier Life: Tennessee Hoe Cake

Tennessee becomes the 16th state of the newly formed, United States of America in 1796. This means that outside of the 13 original colonies, Tennessee is just behind Vermont and Kentucky as the first states.

A short three years later, Abram Maury, purchases the land that would become Franklin from Major Anthony Sharp and lays out the town's first map.

The frontier life was simple and the most reliable crop they had was corn- hence the "hoe cake" was created needing only a few simple ingredients for quick fuel.

Recipe Card

Frontier Life: Tennessee Hoe Cake

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups of stone ground cornmeal
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- 1-1 ½ cups of boiling water
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- 1 tsp. of salt
.....
- 2 tbs. of lard or bacon grease
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DIRECTIONS:

Step One: Mix the cornmeal and salt.

Step Two: Pour boiling water over the meal until it forms a stiff paste.

Step Three: Let it sit for 5 minutes (to hydrate the meal).

Step Four: Form into small patties and fry in a heavy iron skillet until golden brown on both sides.

Recipe Card

Antebellum Franklin: Beaten Biscuits

During the Antebellum period in Tennessee, the kitchen was the heart of the home, and a perfectly risen Beaten Biscuit was a point of pride for any host or hostess. True to their name, these biscuits required labor-intensive beating with a mallet every 30–45 minutes.

Traditionally served at church luncheons, weddings, and special gatherings, they were often paired with salt-cured ham and quickly became a staple in every home.

Tennessee produced so much cured ham during this era that it earned the nickname “The Hog and Hominy State,” with Williamson County at the center of this thriving industry.

Recipe Card

Antebellum Franklin: Beaten Biscuits

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 cups of all-purpose flour
.....
- ½ cup of cold lard
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- 1 tsp. of salt
.....
- 1 tsp of sugar
.....
- ¾ or 1 cup of cold milk
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DIRECTIONS:

Step One: Sift the flour, salt, and sugar into a large bowl. Cut in the chilled lard using a pastry cutter or your fingertips until the mixture resembles coarse cornmeal.

Step Two: Gradually add the cold milk. You want a very stiff, dry dough—just enough moisture to hold the flour together.

Step Three: Place the dough on a sturdy wooden surface. Fold it over and strike it repeatedly with a heavy rolling pin. Continue folding and beating for about 20–30 minutes (or until the dough is smooth, glossy, and makes a distinct popping sound when hit).

Continued...

Recipe Card

Civil War: Hardtack and Bean Soup

Bean soup and hardtack weren't created to taste good—they were designed to keep soldiers alive during the American Civil War.

Hardtack, a rock-hard cracker made to last forever, was mass-produced as an easy, portable source of energy (soldiers oftentimes dunked it in coffee or bean soup to soften it).

Bean soup, on the other hand, was the warm, hearty meal cooked in camp, mixing beans with salty meat to create something filling and nutritious.

Together, this simple duo gave soldiers the carbs, protein, and fat they needed to survive long marches and tough conditions.

Recipe Card

Civil War: Hardtack

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups of all-purpose flour
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- $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 cup of water
.....
- 1 tsp. of salt
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Step One: Preheat your oven to 375°F. In a large bowl, combine the flour and salt. Gradually add the water while stirring until the dough becomes stiff and no longer sticks to your hands. You want a dry, tough dough

Step Two: On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough out into a rough rectangle about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick.

DIRECTIONS:

Step Three: Cut the dough into 3x3 inch squares.

Step Four: Use a skewer or a fork to poke a 3x3 or 4x4 grid of holes into each square. This is crucial—it ensures the cracker dries out completely in the center and doesn't rise or puff up.

Step Five: Place the squares on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake for 30 minutes. Flip each cracker over and bake for another 30 minutes.

Step Six: Turn the oven off and let the hardtack sit inside as it cools, or leave them out on a counter for a day or two to ensure every bit of moisture is gone. They should be hard as a rock.

Recipe Card

Civil War: Soldier's Bean Soup

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups of dried white beans
.....
- ½ lb of salt pork or unsliced bacon
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- 1 large onion
.....
- salt and pepper
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DIRECTIONS:

Step One: Soak the beans in water for at least 6 hours and cut the salt pork into small cubes.

Step Two: Place the soaked beans, salt pork, and chopped onion into a large pot. Cover with 2in. of water.

Step Three: Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer. The soup is ready when the beans are soft enough to be mashed easily with a spoon. (2-3 hrs)

Step Four: Take a ladle full of beans, mash them into a paste, and stir them back into the broth. .

Recipe Card

Reconstruction Style Hopping John

The Reconstruction Era was a time of culinary transition. As the nation struggled to rebuild, its food reflected a blend of wartime necessity, the ingenuity and resilience of newly emancipated Black Americans, and the gradual return of luxury ingredients like sugar and fine flour.

One dish that captures the spirit of this era is Hopping John. While its origins stretch back much earlier, it became especially meaningful during Reconstruction.

Made from simple, accessible ingredients like black-eyed peas—also known as cowpeas—and rice, it reflects the realities of a war-torn South. Over time, it also came to symbolize luck, prosperity, and hope for the New Year.

Recipe Card

Reconstruction Style Hopping John

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup of black-eyed peas (cowpeas)
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- 1 cup of long white gran rice
.....
- ¼ lb salt pork or a meaty ham hock
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- 1 medium onion
.....
- 4 cups of water
.....
- ½ tsp dried red pepper flakes
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- Salt and black pepper to taste
.....

DIRECTIONS:

Step One: Soak the dried peas overnight in cold water. Drain and rinse.

Step Two: In a large heavy pot, place the salt pork (or ham hock), the chopped onion, and the red pepper. Add 4 cups of water. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer for about 30 minutes to flavor the water.

Step Three: Add the soaked peas to the pot. Cover and simmer until the peas are nearly tender but still firm (usually 30–45 minutes).

Continued...

Recipe Card

Reconstruction Style Hopping John

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup of black-eyed peas (cowpeas)
.....
- 1 cup of long white gran rice
.....
- ¼ lb salt pork or a meaty ham hock
.....
- 1 medium onion
.....
- 4 cups of water
.....
- ½ tsp dried red pepper flakes
.....
- Salt and black pepper to taste
.....

DIRECTIONS:

Step Four: Stir in the rice. Ensure there is enough liquid to cover the rice by about an inch. If not, add a little more water.

Step Five: Cover the pot with a tight-fitting lid. Turn the heat to low and cook for 20 minutes without lifting the lid.

Step Six: Turn off the heat and let it sit, covered, for 5–10 minutes. Fluff with a fork. The goal is for the rice and peas to be distinct and relatively dry, not mushy.

Recipe Card

Gilded Age: Lobster Newberg

During the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, food reflected a shift from luxury to science and modern living. Lobster Newberg began as a high-end “status dish” served in elite restaurants, showcasing wealth and sophistication. As the Progressive Era embraced home economics, it evolved into a trendy “chafing dish” recipe—letting middle-class families recreate elegance at home with precision and care. This dish perfectly captures the transition from extravagant dining to a more standardized, modern, and “scientific” approach to cooking.

This era saw the publication of the Fannie Farmer Cookbook (1896), which introduced standardized level measurements (cups, teaspoons).

Before this, recipes used vague terms like "a walnut-sized lump of butter." Lobster Newberg recipes from this time are among the first to be written with the precision we recognize today.

Recipe Card

Gilded Age: Lobster Newberg

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups cooked lobster meat
.....
- ¼ cup (4 tbsp) butter
.....
- ½ cup heavy cream
.....
- 2 egg yolks, beaten
.....
- 3 tbsp Sherry
.....
- ½ tsp salt
.....
- A pinch of cayenne pepper or nutmeg
.....

DIRECTIONS:

Step One: Melt the butter in a saucepan (or a traditional silver chafing dish) over low heat. Add the lobster meat and cook gently for about 3 minutes until the lobster is heated through and coated in butter..

Step Two: Stir in the Sherry and cook for another minute to allow the alcohol to reduce slightly.

Step Three: In a small bowl, whisk the egg yolks into the heavy cream until smooth.

Continued...

Recipe Card

Gilded Age: Lobster Newberg

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cups cooked lobster meat
.....
- ¼ cup (4 tbsp) butter
.....
- ½ cup heavy cream
.....
- 2 egg yolks, beaten
.....
- 3 tbsp Sherry
.....
- ½ tsp salt
.....
- A pinch of cayenne pepper or nutmeg
.....

DIRECTIONS:

Step Four: Turn the heat to very low (to prevent the eggs from scrambling). Slowly pour the cream and egg mixture into the lobster. Stir constantly.

Step Five: Continue stirring until the sauce thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon. Do not let it boil. Season with salt and a tiny pinch of cayenne or nutmeg.

Step Six: Pour the lobster and its rich sauce over hot toast points. Garnish with a sprig of parsley for that "proper" Progressive Era presentation.

Recipe Card

Roaring Twenties: Pineapple Upside-Down Cake

The Roaring Twenties in Middle Tennessee was defined by two major forces: Prohibition and the rise of convenience culture. As Franklin and Williamson County became more connected to Nashville via the Interurban and the growing popularity of the automobile, the food shifted from the heavy, labor-intensive meals of the 19th century to "party foods" and quick, branded dishes.

The most iconic recipe of this era is the Pineapple Upside-Down Cake. While it sounds modern, it was the "high-tech" dessert of the 1920s. It utilized the newly mass-produced canned pineapple (from companies like Dole) and the maraschino cherry, which became a staple of the decade's vibrant, decorative aesthetic.

Recipe Card

Roaring Twenties: Pineapple Upside-Down Cake

INGREDIENTS:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ¼ cup of butter
..... | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 large egg
..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ½ cup of light brown sugar
..... | <input type="checkbox"/> ½ cup milk
..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 can (20 oz) pineapple slices drained
..... | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 tsp vanilla extract
..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7-10 maraschino cherries
..... | <input type="checkbox"/> 1/3 cup melted butter
..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
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| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 cup granulated sugar
..... | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 tsp baking powder
..... | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ½ tsp salt
..... | |

Recipe Card

Roaring Twenties: Pineapple Upside-Down Cake

DIRECTIONS:

Step One: Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Place the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of butter in a 9-inch cast-iron skillet and put it in the oven until melted.

Step Two: Remove the skillet and sprinkle the brown sugar evenly over the melted butter. Arrange the pineapple slices in a single layer on top of the sugar. Place a maraschino cherry in the center of each pineapple ring.

Step Three: In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Add the egg, milk, vanilla, and melted butter. Beat until smooth (about 2 minutes).

Step Four: Pour the batter carefully over the pineapple slices, smoothing the top. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean.

Step Five: Let the cake cool for only 5 minutes. Run a knife around the edge, place a large plate over the skillet, and flip it over quickly. The fruit and caramel will now be on top.

Recipe Card

The Great Depression: The Poor Man's Meal

The Great Depression was a time of extreme resourcefulness. In Williamson County, where the economy was still heavily tied to the land, "making do" became an art form. Families who could no longer afford butter, eggs, or milk turned to "Wacky Cake" or "Depression Cake," but the most iconic, savory staple of the era was Water Cocoa or, more famously, Poor Man's Meal.

In 1932, a 5lb bag of potatoes cost about 18 cents, and a pound of hot dogs was roughly 12 cents. For about 30 cents, a mother in Franklin could provide a hot, calorie-dense dinner that felt like "meat and potatoes" even if the meat was mostly filler.

This era changed the Southern palate, moving it away from the heavy creams of the Gilded Age and toward the salt-and-starch-heavy "comfort foods" we often associate with the region today.

Recipe Card

The Great Depression: The Poor Man's Meal

INGREDIENTS:

- 3-4 potatoes
.....
- 1 medium yellow onion
.....
- 2-3 hotdogs cut into "coins"
.....
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil, lard/ bacon grease
.....
- ½ cup water
.....
- Salt and lots of black pepper
.....

DIRECTIONS:

Step One: Heat the oil in a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat and add the onions and cook until they start to turn translucent.

Step Two: Add the cubed potatoes. Spread them out and let them sit for a few minutes to get a crust before stirring.

Step Three: Once the potatoes are mostly tender, toss in the thin hot dog slices. Fry until the hot dogs start to curl and brown.

Step Four: Pour the ½ cup of water into the pan. It will hiss and steam. Cover the pan immediately with a lid or a large plate and turn the heat to low for 5 minutes. This ensures the potatoes are soft all the way through.

Recipe Card

Post War Era: Green Bean Casserole

The Postwar Era in Williamson County was a time of "Modern Miracles." As soldiers returned home, the economy boomed, and the I-65 corridor began to turn rural farmland into the first suburbs. In the kitchen, the "scarcity" of the Depression were replaced by an obsession with convenience, technology, and frozen foods.

The most iconic recipe of this era is the Green Bean Casserole. Created in 1955 by the Campbell Soup Company test kitchen.

The 1950s was the age of the "One-Dish Meal." With the rise of television and busier social schedules, families wanted meals that could be prepped ahead of time and popped into the new, modern electric oven.

Recipe Card

Post War Era: Green Bean Casserole

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 cans green beans drained
- 1 can condensed Cream of Mushroom soup
- ½ cup milk
- 1 tsp soy sauce
- Dash of black pepper
- 1 ¼ cups French's French Fried Onions

DIRECTIONS:

Step One: In a 1.5-quart casserole dish, stir together the mushroom soup, milk, soy sauce, and black pepper until smooth.

Step 2: Stir in the drained green beans and 2/3 cup of the fried onions.

Step 3: Place in a 350°F (175°C) oven for 25 minutes or until the mixture is hot and bubbling.

Step 4: Stir the beans once more, then sprinkle the remaining fried onions over the top. Bake for an additional 5 minutes until the onions are golden brown.