

CHRISTMAS SWEET DISHES.

Now that the festive season is once more approaching, and with it the gathering together of scattered families, the anxious housekeeper begins to worry about providing for the numerous tea and supper-parties which are a part of the festivities, and so now I will try and give directions how to make some new and suitable dainties in the way of cakes (the joy of the children come for the holidays), and also of some sweets for the supper-table.

I will begin by giving directions how to make two things which we always have here in Scotland at Christmas, namely, "Christmas Currant Bun," and "Shortbread."

For the *Currant Bun* you have two lots of ingredients, one for the crust and the other for the inside. For the crust, you require a breakfastcupful and a half of flour, quarter of a pound of butter, half a teaspoonful of baking-powder, and enough water to make a paste. For the cake, take one pound of fine flour, half a pound of sugar, two pounds of raisins, two pounds of currants, quarter of a pound of orange peel, quarter of a pound of almonds, half an ounce of ground ginger, half an ounce of ground cinnamon, half an ounce of Jamaica pepper, half a teaspoonful of black pepper, one teaspoonful of carbonate of soda, one teaspoonful of cream of tartar, and one breakfastcupful of sweet milk. Stone the raisins, have the currants well cleaned, the orange peel finely cut, and the almonds blanched, and left whole or halved, as desired. Take the first lot of ingredients, flour, butter, etc.; rub the butter into the flour, add the baking-powder, and enough cold water to make a nice firm paste. Roll out to a thin sheet. Take a square tin, not too large, grease it well inside, and line it neatly with the paste, leaving enough for a cover, and be sure and join it neatly. Cut the cover the size of the tin, and lay it aside while you mix the cake.

Put the fruit, sugar, and all the dry ingredients into a large bowl or basin and mix them well together, so that the spices may get well incorporated; then add the milk, good measure, and with the hand well mix it in till all is thoroughly moistened; this must be carefully done or else you will find the mixture quite dry at the bottom of the basin. The mixture will be a stiffish dough. Now put it carefully into the paste-lined tin, and with your fingers, previously wet in milk, smooth it on the top to make it level, then put on the paste cover, moisten the edges to join them, pinch them all round, brush over the top with egg, prick all over with a fork, and bake for three and a half hours in a good oven. Put a thick paper over the top to prevent its burning while it is baking.

Shortbread.—This is a Scotch delicacy that is a universal favourite with our friends "over the Border," and is well worth the patient kneading it requires. When once the art is acquired it does not seem nearly such hard work. Put on the baking-board three and a half ounces of sifted sugar and three quarters of a pound of butter; work in the sugar to the butter, then knead in gradually a pound and three quarters of fine flour into which has been sifted one teaspoonful of Borwick's baking-powder. When all the flour has been kneaded in it will be rather a dry paste. Take about an eighth of the paste, and with the palm of the hand knead it out slowly into a round cake about a quarter of an inch thick, pinch round the edges, and bake on paper in a moderate oven to a pale brown. When done take them out, and while hot strew over them thickly sifted sugar. I have given one eighth of the paste as the quantity for each cake, because it will be found easier at first to make them smaller, as the dough is so difficult to

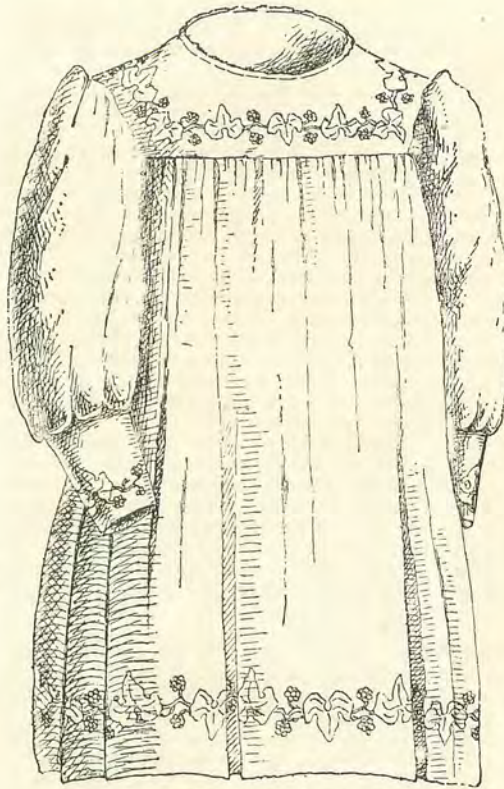


FIG. 5.—CHILD'S FROCK.

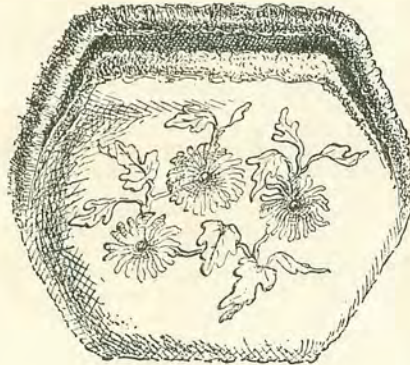
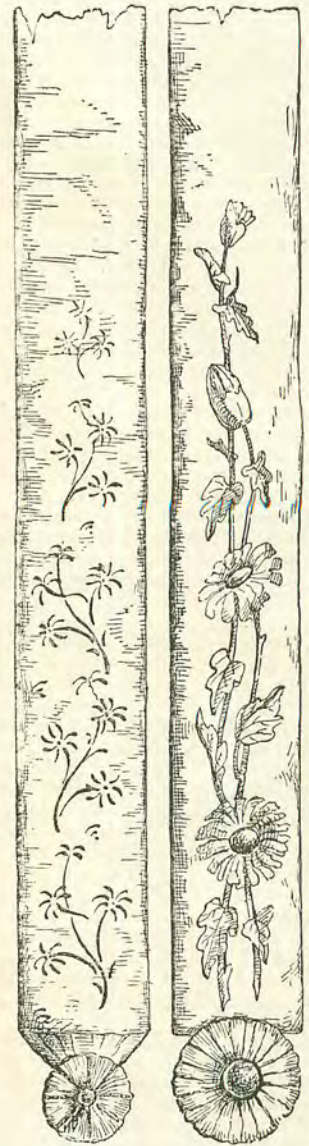


FIG. 6.—FOOT MUFF.



FIGS. 7-8.—BELL-PULLS.

keep from crumbling; but six cakes is really the number that should be made with the quantity of flour, etc. Whatever you do, don't make the shortbread thick—it is not nearly so nice to look at nor to taste.

If kept in a tin box it will keep a long time, and only requires to be toasted in the oven for a few minutes, and when cool will be as crisp as though newly made.

The following cake is usually a favourite one to make amongst the supply at this time, and the one thing to be careful about is the baking, as owing to the syrup in it it is very easily scorched. Be sure and bake it with a stout paper over the top of it. *Spice Cake* requires three quarters of a pound of flour of rice, quarter of a pound of ground rice, half a pound of flour, three quarters of a pound of fine flour, one pound of castor sugar, a pound and a half of golden syrup, nine eggs, one ounce of ground ginger, one ounce of ground cinnamon, and one nutmeg grated. Beat in a basin the eggs and sugar till light and white, then add the butter previously beaten to a cream, and beat all together for a little while, then add the flour with two teaspoonfuls of

baking-powder mixed in, then the ground rice, flour of rice, spices, and syrup; beat all well together, then pour into a buttered and paper-lined tin and bake till dry in the centre when tested with a knife run into it.

Peel Cake.—One pound of sugar, a good three quarters of a pound of butter, a pound and a half of flour, twelve eggs, a pound and a half of orange, lemon, and citron peel mixed, two teaspoonfuls of baking-powder. Beat sugar and butter for half an hour together, then put in the peel finely shred, then the eggs and flour alternately, till all is in, beating all the time. Bake in paper-lined and well-buttered tin.

Dundee Cake.—Five ounces of butter, six ounces of sifted sugar, five ounces of flour, three eggs, two tablespoonfuls of milk, quarter of a pound of sultana raisins, quarter of a pound of blanched whole almonds, and two ounces of peel. Beat sugar and butter to a cream, add one egg and a spoonful of the flour, beat well; add another egg and more flour, beat again; then third egg and flour, then the remainder of the flour and milk, and beat well. Put in the fruit and half of the almonds, mix and pour

into a well-buttered tin; sprinkle the rest of the almonds cut in halves on the top, and bake in good oven for three quarters of an hour.

For Dessert Cakes, whisk till light and white half a pound of castor sugar and six eggs; add six ounces of ground almonds, grated rind of half a lemon, and lastly, sift in half a pound of fine flour. Place in small well-buttered tins and bake in a good oven.

Croquettes.—Mix a pound and a half of fine sugar, three quarters of a pound of ground almonds, and three quarters of a pound of fine flour. Make to a stiff paste with eggs, roll out thin, and bake. Or else, take one pound of fine sugar and the same quantity of ground almonds, make to a stiff paste with the beaten yolks of three eggs, make into small shapes, lay them on paper sprinkled with sugar, and bake in a cool oven to a nice pale brown.

New Year's Cakes.—A pound and a quarter of sugar, one pound of butter, half a pint of cold water, three eggs, three pounds of fine flour, one teaspoonful of carbonate of soda dissolved in a very little hot water, four tablespoonfuls of caraway seeds sprinkled in the flour. Rub the butter or chop it up into the flour, dissolve the sugar in the water, mix all well with the beaten eggs, cut into small square or round cakes, and bake in a quick oven. This is a large quantity.

Rose Biscottines.—One pound of fine flour, eight ounces of sifted sugar, eight ounces of butter, half an ounce of baking-powder, one wineglassful of rose-water, and two eggs. Sift the baking-powder into the flour, rub in butter and sugar, make a hole in the centre, and into it put the eggs and rose-water; stir together and make into a stiff, firm paste, roll out to one eighth of an inch thick, and then cut out into small rounds or fancy shapes. Lay on buttered baking-tins, and bake in a warm oven.

And now that I have, I think, given you enough variety in cakes to choose from, I shall pass on to the sweet dishes suitable for supper at small musical or evening parties. Some of the above small cakes are suitable for the supper-table to serve when tea and coffee are provided.

Everyone likes *Meringues*, so be sure and have a heaped dish of them; they are not troublesome nor expensive to make. Whisk on a large plate the whites of six eggs to as stiff a froth as possible, then put them into a basin, and with a wooden spoon stir in as quickly as possible twelve ounces of castor sugar. Have ready strips of paper laid on boards, put the mixture out in spoonfuls as nearly egg-shaped as possible; do not let them touch each other; sprinkle some sugar over each, and bake in a moderate oven to a very pale brown. Take them out, turn them over on their backs on fresh paper, and with a teaspoon take a spoonful of the soft mixture out from the middle, taking care not to break them; return to oven to harden, then take them out,

and when cold they will be quite crisp. Fill with whipped cream sweetened with sugar and flavoured with vanilla essence. The secret of success in the making is to get them quickly into the oven after the sugar is stirred in, otherwise it melts, and they lose their shape before they are set by the baking. If the eggs are large a little more than the twelve ounces of sugar may be used.

Fig Compôte.—One dozen figs cut up put on in a pan with a sixpenny packet of gelatine, two ounces of sugar, and enough water to cover all. Simmer for two hours. Pour into a mould previously wet with cold water, and when set turn out and serve with whipped cream round it. Prunes can be done in the same way, using half a pound of prunes to the packet of gelatine. Stone the fruit; and half a glass of port wine added after they are cooked and before putting into the mould is a great improvement.

French Oranges.—Cut four oranges in halves, take out the pulp carefully and nick out the edges of the rind and leave to soak in water. Squeeze the juice of the pulp through a sieve and add water to make up two breakfastcupfuls. Put it in a pan with one ounce of gelatine, quarter of a pound of sugar, white and shell of one egg, juice and rind of small lemon; whisk over the fire till it boils, let it settle a minute, then strain through a jelly bag. Fill the rinds with the jelly, and when set whip up one teacupful of thick cream with a little sugar and a few drops of vanilla essence, and pile over the jelly roughly.

Orange Cream.—One ounce of isinglass, six large oranges, one lemon, sugar, water, and half a pint of cream. Rub sugar on rind of orange, put in a pan with the strained juice, the isinglass, and enough water to make up a pint and a half. Boil for ten minutes, strain, and when cold beat up with it the half pint of thick cream. Pour into a wet mould, and when set turn out.

Pineapple Jelly.—Take one tin of preserved pineapple, cut the fruit in small pieces, and put it in a pan with its own juice with sugar to taste, a spoonful of lemon juice and one ounce of gelatine, and a good half pint of water. Simmer about one hour, and strain through a jelly bag into a wet mould.

Russian Pudding.—One quart of claret, one ounce of isinglass, three quarters of a pound of loaf sugar, juice of a lemon, one breakfastcupful of damson jam, and one glass of brandy. Soak the isinglass in the claret, brandy, and sugar, then add the jam, and stir over the fire. Let it boil for five minutes, and then strain into a wet casserole mould. When set, turn out and serve with whipped cream in the centre.

Pudding à la Métropole.—Cut a round or oval shilling sponge cake in slices, spread each with lemon preserve, and pile upon each other in a glass dish. Pour over two tablespoonfuls of sherry wine, and glaze with the following mixture: Two good tablespoonfuls of apricot

jam, three of water, and one of sugar. Boil till the jam is quite dissolved, put through a strainer, and add a quarter of an ounce of dissolved gelatine. When half cool pour over the cake, and let it stand till set. Ornament round the edge and top with dried cherries and strips of angelica, and round it place spoonfuls of whipped cream.

Apricot Cream.—One dozen and a half of tinned apricots; stew with a little of the syrup and an ounce of sugar till a soft pulp, and rub through a strainer. Boil a pint and a half of milk with three tablespoonfuls of sugar. Let it cool, then add the yolks of eight eggs well beaten. Put into a jug set in a pan of water, and stir till mixture thickens; add an ounce and a half of isinglass which has been boiled in a little water, and when the cream is cold add the apricots and mix well. Pour into a mould, and put in a cool place till set.

Greengage Compôte.—Take a round sponge cake, and cut a slice off the top about an inch thick; then cut out the centre of the cake, leaving the sides quite an inch thick. Fill the hole with stewed greengages (or any kind of fruit), and place the slice on again as a lid; pour over the syrup, and leave an hour to soak. Make a thick custard; pour it over the cake, and ornament with split blanched almonds and angelica. The centre of the cake can be used as cake, or else to make a small Trifle or Topsy Cake.

Orange Fool.—The juice of four large sweet oranges, three eggs well beaten, one pint of good cream, a scraped nutmeg, cinnamon, and sugar to taste. Set it on the fire till it is as thick as lemon preserve, and do not let it boil. Pour into a glass dish or custard glasses, and serve when cold.

Lemon Snow.—Dissolve three quarters of an ounce of isinglass in one pint of boiling water, add half a pound of loaf sugar, and the rind of two lemons cut very thin. Boil ten minutes, strain, and while hot add the strained juice of the two lemons. When nearly cold, whisk till it looks like snow. Pour into a wet mould and turn out the next day.

Those creams, etc., with gelatine can be made the day before they are wanted, which, besides being a saving of labour, ensures their being quite set before they are turned out; indeed, if kept as they ought to be, in a cool place, they will keep for two days. Of course where whipped cream is used to put round, it must not be done till the day it is used. The meringue cases keep for several days if kept dry, and can be filled as required.

All the foregoing "sweets" are also suitable for dinners, as hot puddings are not so much used now, except for more informal dinner-parties.

I hope amongst the recipes I have given my readers may be able to find something new; and I know all are good, and quite worth a trial

"CONSTANCE."

ON BEHALF OF A FRIEND

By RUTH LAMB.

CHAPTER I.

"Is it a nice letter, darling? I hope it is. Real good news, that makes you like to read it over and over."

A child asked the question—my solitary pupil, Margery Fothergill, also my dear little friend.

I had spent an unconscionable time over what was *only a short note*, and Margery had watched my face with those wistful loving eyes of hers, as if she were trying to read from it whether the message was pleasant

or otherwise. Apparently she could not decide whether I needed sympathy on account of a disagreeable communication, or whether it might be nice enough to rejoice over.

"What do you think, Madge? You have been reading my face. What has it to you?"

The child replied with perfect frankness—

"It puzzles me, darling. You smiled once, as if you were amused, but you gave your lip a little turn at the same time, as if the person

that wrote the letter had not said the truth, or else that—"

Madge paused as if she could not quite put her meaning into words.

"I am not sure that I can tell you. Perhaps the look said you had found out something the person did not mean you to know."

I laughed heartily at the child's way of putting things.

"Madge, you are quite too keen sighted—not with your eyes, but with your mind. You are a little thought-reader, for it is quite true