

HOW AMERICAN BREAD IS MADE.



E cannot help feeling that bread has first claim on our space. As a rule, there is so little variety on an ordinary table, be the meal what it may, and as the various kinds of flour can now be bought of grocers and at the vegetarian depôts in most large towns, there is but little excuse for the non-appearance of many kinds, at once cheap and nourishing. On a New York breakfast-table bread in every form, size, and colour, either hot or cold, is obtainable, as well as many other dainties which we hope to include in future articles. American housewives are skilful judges of flour, but it will suffice here—without entering into detail as to the various tests of quality—to advise our readers always to buy the best only, whether brown or white, and for whatever purpose it may be required. Equally important is the goodness of the yeast; a nice batch of bread is an impossibility if stale, sour yeast is used; and many Americans make their own, even when it is quite easy to obtain good brewers' yeast. Without recommending home-made in preference to brewers' (for, when really good, none is better), we give one or two recipes that may be useful, and are certainly reliable.

Newhaven Yeast.—Boil a handful of hops in a bag in a couple of quarts of water, with eight ounces of pared potatoes, until the latter break; then mash them up with an ounce of flour, three ounces of salt, and the same of brown sugar. Pour the boiling hop-water on this, and when lukewarm, add enough German or French yeast to ferment it well. Bottle when cold, and keep in a cool place.

Potato Yeast is made by mashing a dozen large boiled potatoes with a tea-cupful of flour and a tea-spoonful of salt, then mixing with dissolved German yeast to make a batter; this is best for immediate use, but may be bottled if kept very cool.

A good yeast, "self-working"—that is, without the addition of any other to excite fermentation—can be got by boiling two ounces of hops in a gallon of water for one hour; then, when lukewarm, remove the hops (which should be tied in muslin), and add the hop-liquor gradually to a pound of flour; beat in a table-spoonful of salt and half a pound of white sugar, and set away for a couple of days in a bowl covered with a cloth in a warm place. On the third day add the hop liquor to six or eight potatoes, boiled and mashed. Let it stand for twelve hours longer in a warm kitchen, then store in jars; cork well. This will keep three or four months in a cool cellar.

A very excellent and nutritious bread, which we recommend for general family use, is made with two-thirds Graham flour (what is called in England whole meal or brown flour) and one-third fine white.

To each quart a good tea-spoonful of salt should be added. As the English are not so fond of sweets as their American cousins, they will reduce the quantity of sugar and molasses sufficiently to suit their palates; therefore, instead of recommending a tea-cupful of treacle, mixed with the yeast, for each loaf of the bread, we think that quantity to *four* loaves will be more to their mind. This dough requires good yeast, and must be well kneaded, mixed soft, and thoroughly baked. A fierce oven will spoil it.

Boston Brown Bread.—Make this by substituting two parts Indian meal and one part rice flour for wheaten flour, adding, as well as yeast, a small quantity of soda or saleratus. It requires well kneading, and must rise for five hours at least, and after it is made into loaves they should rise an hour longer. Bake a four-pound loaf quite three hours; the oven *must* be slow.

Ordinary family bread from white flour is generally mixed with "sponge" made over-night. A very good recipe is as under:—Half a dozen potatoes boiled and mashed while hot, a quarter-pint of brewers' yeast, two ounces of white sugar, two ounces of lard, one tea-spoonful of soda, three cupfuls of flour (say a pint), one quart of warm water—that in which the potatoes were boiled. In mixing, add the soda last of all. Cover lightly in warm weather and tightly in winter. This quantity will make up from two to three quarts of flour—sufficient to bake at a time for a small family. The inexperienced in bread-making from sponge in place of yeast must remember that it requires to be twice kneaded: first when the sponge and flour are well amalgamated, then the most thorough kneading is necessary, and again after the dough has risen, when ten minutes or so will suffice. Then, after putting into greased tins, or making into rolls and laying them in one large tin, again leave the dough near the fire for an hour previous to baking.

We must now mention a few kinds of fancy bread; they will perhaps be more welcome to the majority.

Rice Bread, very light and delicate for invalids, and a pleasant change from that usually made, requires that a tea-cupful of well-boiled rice be added to each quart of wheaten flour. When making the bread, put in with the yeast a little sugar and dissolved lard or butter. *Hominy Bread* is made the same way; take care that the hominy is well boiled. In each case put salt as usual.

Buttermilk Bread is a great delicacy, popular all through the United States. It is very easy to make, and particularly wholesome. Into each pint of buttermilk, made hot, stir flour to form a thick batter, add a couple of spoonfuls of yeast, and let it stand a few hours. Then stir in a tea-spoonful of soda, the same of salt, and a couple of ounces of dissolved butter, and work in enough flour to make a nice dough. Knead well, make into loaves, and let it rise until light.

Buttermilk Muffins have but to be tried to become a standing winter dish. Beat hard two eggs into a

quart of buttermilk, stir in flour to make a thick batter, about a quart, and lastly, a tea-spoonful of salt and the same of soda. Bake in a hot oven in well-greased tins. Muffins of all kinds should only be cut just round the edge, then pulled open with the fingers.

Graham Muffins are more substantial and easy of digestion than those made with white flour. Mix into a smooth batter three cupfuls of Graham flour, one cupful of white ditto, one quart of milk, half-cupful of yeast, one tea-spoonful of salt, one ounce of sugar, and the same of lard dissolved in the milk. Set to rise over-night, and in the morning beat in an egg, and bake in a good oven for twenty minutes.

Cream Muffins are delicious; perhaps only those who keep cows will feel inclined to be extravagant enough to indulge in them. Beat six eggs, a pint of cream, and a pint of milk well together; add an ounce of lard and an ounce of butter, a tea-spoonful of salt, and a quart of flour *stirred in lightly*. Half fill the rings, and bake in a sound oven.

Rice Muffins.—Beat hard into a batter a cupful of rice—boiled—a pint of flour, two eggs, a little salt, an ounce of butter, and nearly a quart of milk. The harder you beat and the more quickly you bake, the better they will be.

French Rolls made thus are worth trying:—Set a sponge, by mixing a quart of flour, a cupful of yeast, and a quart of warm milk; when light, work in an egg, a tea-spoonful of salt, half as much soda dissolved in hot water, an ounce of sugar, and flour to make a soft dough. In two or three hours, shape into balls, and set them in a greased baking-tin. In half an hour's time, gash each one across with a knife. Brush over with milk, and bake in a good oven nearly half an hour.

Potato Scones are very good. Mash eight or ten boiled potatoes, mix with two ounces of sugar, half a pint of warm milk, a couple of table-spoonfuls of yeast, and enough flour to make a batter. Let this rise, then beat in enough flour to make it sufficiently stiff to roll out; again let it rise, then roll out half an inch thick; cut into rounds or squares, and bake. Butter the tops liberally.

Dough Crumpets are Boston favourites, and easily made. A pound of ordinary bread dough, white or brown, needs a half-cupful of white sugar, three ounces of butter, and three eggs, to be beaten hard into it. Bake in muffin-rings well buttered.

Lincoln Shortcake ought to become popular at high teas. Beat four ounces of lard and butter into cream, stir in a salt-spoonful of salt, and a good pinch of soda dissolved in just enough vinegar to cover it; then put in a pound of fine flour, dried and sifted. Mix with water or milk to a stiff paste, and roll out half an inch thick. Prick all over, and bake until brown. Split while hot, and butter plentifully.

We must not omit a couple of recipes for "hot biscuits," taking care to impress upon those who make note of them that in America the word "biscuit" is

applied to what, in Great Britain, would perhaps be called buns, tea-cakes, or fancy rolls; and what *here* are called biscuits are known *there* as "crackers." Try, then, either of the following when you want to initiate yourself into the good graces of any one who has come to take tea.

Yeast Biscuits require a pint of milk, a half-cupful of lard and butter mixed, a half-quarter of yeast, a table-spoonful of sugar, a salt-spoonful of salt, and flour to make a soft dough. Mix all together six hours before tea-time, adding *half* the flour only—just enough to make a leaven; cover with a cloth, and leave to rise. Make up with the remainder of the flour, roll out half an inch thick into round cakes, leave to rise in the baking-tin for twenty minutes near the fire, and lastly, bake in a hot oven for twenty minutes, or rather less. These will be beautifully light and sweet if properly mixed, and the oven really hot.

Soda Biscuits are equally good. Mix together a quart of *dry* white flour, a tea-spoonful of carbonate of soda, and two of cream of tartar; pass through a sieve to lighten, then rub in two ounces of lard and a little salt. Mix with milk quite soft, only stiff enough to handle without sticking to the fingers; roll it out on a floured board, then double it over and roll out again: this makes thin flakes. Cut and bake as for "yeast biscuits." Either may be eaten with or without butter, and brown flour used in place of white makes *Graham Biscuits*. Buttermilk, or sour milk, may take the place of sweet, in recipes where soda and cream of tartar are used, provided the tartar is *left out*, buttermilk or sour milk being sufficiently acid, only soda is necessary.

Our bread paper would be sadly incomplete if we failed to mention "corn-meal bread," a staple article of diet in some parts of the States, among the poorer classes chiefly, though any one would find a meal of it very satisfying during cold weather, and nearly all children like it. Indian meal should be bought in small quantities; the lighter in colour makes the best bread.

Risen Corn Bread may be made in the ordinary way with yeast, using two-thirds corn and one-third wheaten flour, except that a little sugar improves it, and two ounces of lard or butter should be added to every quart of meal used. An easy way for a "test-loaf" without yeast is to beat three eggs hard with three cupfuls of milk, in which a piece of lard the size of an egg has been dissolved, then put in three cupfuls of Indian meal, one cupful of flour, one tea-spoonful of salt, six of sugar, one of soda, two of cream of tartar. Beat hard again, and bake in a well-buttered mould very steadily. Muffins or crumpets may be made as above, but a little thinner, more milk being required. Bake in rings or patty-pans.

The numerous family of griddle-cakes, as well as jumbles, crullers, dough-nuts, and the various kinds of richer cakes, are reserved for treatment in a future chapter.

