

I enjoy all of the naughty (and healthy) foods that Scottish cooks prepare so well, and I often crave them when I get home from a visit to Scotland. Sometimes I satisfy my craving by cooking some of my favorite things, and I have put together a few of my favorite recipes for other travelers who might be feeling withdrawals from the great food of Scotland.

Twenty years ago or more I noticed that the food served in Scottish hotels and restaurants was usually better than it was in their neighbor to the South. I discovered that some wise person in the Scottish government had put together a program called "A Taste of Scotland," which invested funds in the training of Scottish cooks...who segued from being mere cooks to being *Chefs*. The program gave the chef's after-training and a new set of well-trialed recipes each year, as well as follow-up training sessions. I feel that there was already a good standard of cooking in Scotland to begin with, because they used a premise which became popular much later with trendy chefs in California: they only used the freshest local ingredients, and were creative with what they had.

Eventually the cooks in the country to the South of Scotland caught on (and are catching up). But I notice that I don't have the same withdrawal symptoms when I return from there, as I do when I return from Scotland, for those good soups, shortbread, scones, and other traditional foods.

I hope these recipes help satisfy your craving for good Scottish food, especially if you have just returned from Scotland.

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## Sticky Toffee Pudding

### Ingredients:

1/2 stick soft margarine

1/3 stick butter

1 cup white sugar

2 cups plain flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 egg, beaten

1 1/2 cups pitted dates

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1/3 cup light brown sugar

2 tablespoons heavy cream (double cream in the UK)

1/2 pint boiling water

### Method:

Cream together the margarine and white sugar. Sift together the flour and baking powder. Beat the beaten egg into the creamed mixture with a little of the flour and baking powder mixture, and continue beating the mixture before adding the rest of the flour / baking powder mixture to the creamed mixture. Mix well.

Chop the dates and flour lightly. Pour the boiling water over the dates and mix them with the baking soda; add the date mixture to the batter and mix well.

Place the batter in a buttered tin baking pan (or line one with parchment paper) and bake for 40 minutes at 350 degrees F.

Heat the brown sugar, butter and cream and simmer gently for 3 minutes. Pour over the pudding and place under a grill until it starts to bubble, then serve.

## Carrot and Orange Soup

### Ingredients:

1 (or 2) finely chopped onions

1 pound of sliced or diced carrots

1/2 stick butter

1/2 cup plain flour

2 1/2 scant cups chicken stock

2 1/2 scant cups milk

1 orange (juice and rind)

Salt and pepper

1 teaspoon nutmeg

1 rounded tablespoon chopped parsley

### Method:

Melt the butter and add the onions and carrots. Cook gently without browning, then stir in the flour and cook for another 1 or 2 minutes. Gradually add the milk and chicken stock. Season with salt, pepper, & nutmeg.

Bring to a boil, stirring constantly, then simmer for 20 – 30 minutes. Blend using an electrical blender stick (or if you don't have one, you can process in smaller batches in a food processor, or use an old fashioned sieve).

Juice the orange and shred the rind finely.

After the above is blended add the juice from the orange (should be about one cup; add additional from bottle if necessary), and add the shredded rind, and reheat – do not re-boil.

Serve sprinkled with parsley.

## Caramel Shortbread (often called "Millionaire's Shortbread")

Ingredients (biscuit base):

2 cups plain flour

1 1/2 sticks margarine

1/2 cup fine white sugar (sometimes described as special for baking in grocery stores)

Ingredients (filling):

1/2 stick margarine

1/4 to 1/2 cup soft brown sugar

Large can condensed milk (unsweetened)

Ingredients (topping):

1 cup light brown (milk) chocolate

Method:

Rub (cut) the margarine and flour together in a bowl until you have a mix which is similar to breadcrumbs. Stir in the sugar. Spread the mixture evenly into a 9" square baking pan which has been lined with parchment paper. Bake in a preheated 340 degree oven for approximately 35 minutes until it is golden brown. Allow the base to cool.

Heat the filling ingredients together in a pot, making sure that you stir it constantly until it begins to simmer. Continue stirring until it thickens (a few minutes). Spread the filling evenly over the base and again allow it to cool.

Melt the chocolate so that it can be spread over the filling. Allow the whole thing to cool again.

Cut into squares or rectangles to serve.

## Shortbread

(There are as many recipes for shortbread as there are cooks in Scotland. This is just one version!)

### Ingredients:

6 ounces plain flour

4 ounces soft butter

2 ounces super fine (or caster, or 'baking') white sugar

1 ounce cornstarch

### Method:

Preheat the oven to 325 F.

Mix the butter and sugar together, preferably with a wooden spoon until it is pale and creamy. Sieve the flour and cornstarch into the bowl and mix well. Put a small amount of flour on your working surface and place the dough on it. Shake a little flour on top and roll out the dough about a quarter inch thick. Prick with a fork and cut into rounds with a cutter, or if you want one large round, pinch the edges with your thumb and finger all around.

Use a baking knife or large thin metal spatula to lift the shortbread onto an oiled baking tray and bake for 25 minutes. They will be ready when they are pale brown and crisp. If not, return to the oven for 5 - 10 minutes. Shake a small amount of finely granulated white sugar on to the top of the shortbread immediately after you take them out of the oven. Cool on a rack and store in an airtight tin after they are cool.

## Scones

### Ingredients:

2 cups flour

3 teaspoons baking powder

1/4 stick butter or margarine

1/2 to 3/4 cup sour cream

One beaten egg

Pinch of salt

### Method:

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Sift the dry ingredients together and then rub (cut) in the butter. Pour in the sour cream and then add the beaten egg in the center of the mixture, and mix until you get a soft elastic dough. Turn out onto a floured surface and roll out to about a 1/2 inch thick. Prick all over with a fork and cut into rounds with a 1 1/2 inch diameter cutter. Bake for 10 - 15 minutes. (Note: I often use heavy cream instead of sour cream. Warm sour cream in the microwave to make it easier to pour).