



Historic Cooking & Baking Workshop: Little Kitchen in the Big Woods

Schedule:

Make Ginger Water.

Mix batter for Johnny Cakes. Cook on the stove.

Mix dough for Heart-Shaped Christmas Cakes. Cut and put in oven for 40 minutes.

Make custard for Ice Cream.

12 PM – Lunch break

Take Heart-Shaped Christmas Cakes out of oven.

Make Ice Cream.

End at 2 pm

Recipes

Ginger Water from *The Long Winter*

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup packed brown sugar

1 teaspoon powdered ginger

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup apple cider vinegar

1 quart cold water

Dissolve brown sugar and ginger in vinegar by shaking or stirring. Add the cold water, mix, and serve.

Sourced from *The Little House Cookbook: Frontier Foods from Laura Ingalls Wilder's Classic Stories* by Barbara Walker. Modern adaptation from Margaret Darazs on littlehouseontheprairie.com.

Johnny Cakes from *Little House in the Big Woods*

1 cup corn meal

1 teaspoon sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 1/4 cup boiling water

Butter

Mix corn meal, sugar, and salt together.

Slowly add the boiling water to the cornmeal mix. Do not over mix.

Place one large spoonful of batter on a well-greased griddle.

When edges turn brown, wait about 30 seconds and then flip the johnny cake over with a spatula.

Press down to flatten the center of the johnny cake. The second side does not take as long to cook.

Serve warm with butter.

Sourced from *The Laura Ingalls Wilder Companion: A Chapter-by-Chapter Guide* by Amy Whipple.

Heart-Shaped Christmas Cakes from *Little House on the Prairie*

One pound of sugar

One pound of flour

1 1/2 cups of fresh butter

Eight eggs

Two teaspoons of nutmeg

Cream the butter and sugar together until very light, then add the yolks of the eggs, nutmeg, and half of the flour. Beat the whites of the eggs to stiff peaks and gently stir in with the remainder of the flour.

Mix all well together, and bake in small heart shaped tins, sprinkling the cakes with white sugar when they are a little warm.

Sourced from *Miss Beecher's Domestic Receipt Book: Designed as a Supplement to her Treatise on Domestic Economy* (1846) by Miss Catharine Esther Beecher. Recipe for Pound Cake with modern adaptations.

Old Fashioned Lemon Ice Cream from *Farmer Boy*

3 large eggs

1 cup whole milk

1 cup granulated sugar

3 cups heavy whipping cream, divided

2 lemons

5-7 lbs. ice cubes

2-3 lbs. rock salt (ice cream salt)

Teamwork and timing are important here. The custard must be ready for the ice crushing starts. The ice team should assemble equipment in a shaded place outdoors that can't be injured by salt water.

Meanwhile in the kitchen, separate the eggs into two small bowls, yolks in one and whites in the second. Beat the yolks for about a minute, until lighter in color and smooth. Pour the milk into a small saucepan and heat at medium high until simmering. Make sure not to scald the milk. Add in the sugar and stir until dissolved, about 1 ½ minutes. Reduce the heat to medium low. Add in the egg yolks and stir until the custard

thickens enough to coat your wooden spoon with a milky film. Pour the custard into a jar and place in the fridge for later use.

Using a fork, beat egg whites on a platter until they are “too stiff to slip” when the platter is tilted. Teamwork can accomplish this in under 10 minutes. Fold one cup of heavy cream into the whites on the platter and pour the mixture into the jar. Add the remaining cream and stir gently. Cover and chill 10 minutes. Squeeze lemons and strain juice to add in later.

Outdoors, fill a very large wide-mouthed bowl about halfway with ice. Sprinkle on the salt and create a well in the center of the bowl. Take the custard and whipped egg mixture out of the fridge. (Fun fact: The salt will lower the freezing point and produce a solution colder than 32 degrees Fahrenheit.)

Pour the custard into the bowl with the whipped egg mixture. Place the bowl in the ice and pile ice up on the sides. Stop below the top of the custard bowl to make sure no salt enters it.

Stir for 5-10 minutes and cover with a damp dish towel. Let sit for 10 minutes, then repeat scraping and stirring; repeat this process 3-4

times, or until ice cream reaches soft-serve consistency. Add in the lemon juice.

Continue stirring and resting until the ice cream is too stiff to move.

This will take about an hour. Let the ice cream sit undisturbed for 30 minutes.

To serve, scoop into bowls and top with desired toppings.

Sourced from *The Little House Cookbook: Frontier Foods* from Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Classic Stories* by Barbara Walker. Modern adaptation from Margaret Darazs on littlehouseontheprairie.com.

Cooking on the Prairie

Many settlers, like the Ingalls, moved west seeking better opportunities for themselves and their families. They brought only the bare necessities. Whether traveling by train, boat, or covered wagon, people faced tight restrictions on what they could bring to start their new lives. They packed food for the journey, pots, pans, and utensils for cooking, clothing, bedding, and tools for repairing their wagons and building new homes. Anything else needed for survival during the journey and upon arrival had to fit within their 4-foot wide, 8-foot long, and 3-foot-deep wagon box.

These journeys were quite risky, and the family's health relied heavily on their survival skills. Men were expected to be successful hunters, adept at fire-starting, cooking, basic carpentry, gardening, and knowledgeable about edible plants. The women of the family were typically responsible for cooking, cleaning, watching after the children, mending and sewing clothes, providing first aid, and generally filling the roles of wife, mother, nurse, scullery maid, and teacher.

Pioneer families absolutely had to be resourceful, making the most of every single thing they had. Imagine this: there often wasn't a store for hundreds of miles, so buying ingredients for a specific recipe was out of the question. This meant everything, from hearty stews to simple breads, had to be made from scratch, typically cooked over an open fire. In such an environment, nothing went to waste if it could be helped. Every scrap of food, every piece of fabric, every worn-out tool was repurposed or repaired until it could no longer serve a function. This ingrained habit of conservation wasn't just about saving money; it was a fundamental aspect of survival on the frontier.

Laura Ingalls Wilder's beloved books consistently echo this theme. Her descriptions of food are so vivid, they make you feel like you're right there, eating alongside her—and now, you can even experience a taste at home.

Heirloom Measurements



Measurements

1 gallon	16 cups
1 quart	4 cups
1 pint	2 cups
1 pinch or dash	What can be picked up between thumb and first two fingers
½ pinch	What can be picked up between thumb and one finger
1 saltspoon	¼ teaspoon
1 kitchen spoon	1 teaspoon
Butter the size of an egg	¼ cup or 2 ounces

Temperatures

Slow oven	300 degrees F
Moderate oven	350 degrees F
Quick oven	375-400 degrees F
Hot oven	400-425 degrees F
Very hot oven	450-475 degrees F