

Flapjacks

Many English friends really love Flapjacks. You can buy them at almost any bakery, but they are so simple to make yourself that you will never buy them again. A Flapjack is actually a muesli bar made with oats, sugar, syrup and butter. A Flapjack is a blank canvas – often nuts, currants, other dried fruits and chocolate are added, but you can get creative and add whatever you like. I've given some suggestions below.

'Come, thou shalt go home, and we'll have flesh for holidays, fish for fasting-days, and moreo'er puddings and flap-jacks; and thou shalt be welcome.' From *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, by William Shakespeare

For 8–10 bars

220 g (7¾ oz) rolled oats or spelt flakes
200 g (7 oz) butter
100 g (3½ oz) golden syrup, maple syrup or honey
50 g (1¾ oz) soft brown sugar
pinch of sea salt
butter, for greasing
flour, for dusting
chocolate chips (optional)

For a 20 cm (8 inch) square cake tin

Preheat your oven to 160°C (320°F) and prepare the cake tin (see page 21).

Put the oats in a blender and blitz for 3 seconds (skip this step if you are using fine rolled oats).

Melt the butter in a saucepan over low heat (make sure it does not bubble). Add the golden syrup, sugar and salt and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Remove from the heat and add the oats or spelt flakes, plus any other optional ingredients, and stir well.

Firmly press the mixture into the tin so the top is even. Bake in the middle of the oven for 20–30 minutes.

For a chocolate topping, add the chocolate chips as soon as the flapjacks come out of the oven. Once they have melted, use a spatula to spread the chocolate.

Leave the flapjacks to cool in the tin for 15 minutes. Using the baking paper, carefully lift the flapjack out of the tin and cut it into bars or squares.

Variations: add a handful of chocolate chips, chopped pecans, cranberries, dried blueberries, dried apricots or currants, or replace the oats or spelt flakes with your favourite muesli.

BEFORE YOU BAKE

Preparing baking tins

Unless the recipe indicates a different method, the following techniques should be used to prepare the different baking tins. By preparing the baking tins in the correct way, your cake will come out of the tin more easily after baking.

Square, rectangle or loaf tin

Apply a thin layer of butter with a folded sheet of paper towel and divide it nicely into the corners of the baking tin. Apply a strip of baking paper in the tin that covers two sides and protrudes slightly above the top of the tin so that you can remove the cake more easily after baking. Dust the lined tin with flour, hold the tin above your workbench or sink and tap on the bottom to remove the excess flour.

***Oats in the North, Wheat from the South: The history of British baking, savoury and sweet* by Regula Ysewijn (Murdoch Books, £25). Photography by Regula Ysewijn.**