

Tottenham cake (p. 51)

In 1901, pieces of Tottenham cake were given away to children from the London neighbourhood of Tottenham to celebrate the victory of the Tottenham Hotspurs in the Cup. The pink icing is traditionally coloured with mulberry juice and sometimes the cake is finished with hundreds and thousands or desiccated coconut.

John Kirkland writes in *The Modern Baker, Confectioner and Caterer* that this is an easy and quick cake for children's parties and other occasions for which many pieces must be baked in a short time. His recipe is for a giant cake that is made with more than 5 kg (11 lb) of flour, but it is not tasty at all because it contains no egg, and almost no sugar and butter. It clearly had to be cheap to make! The version that I give here is the version that is still sold today – a simple cake, but also delicious.

**'For one penny piece, soft sponge could be bought,
mis-shapen, a ha'penny, a feast that was sought.
Pink icing with colour from mulberry so red,
So sticky, delicious, the people were fed ...'**

'Tottenham Cake', by Henry Jacobs

For 12 portions

For the cake

300 g (10½ oz) butter, at room temperature

300 g (10½ oz) white sugar

6 eggs

500 g (1 lb 2 oz) plain (all-purpose) flour

50 g (1¾ oz) baking powder

85 ml (2¾ fl oz) milk

butter, for greasing

flour, for dusting

For the icing

350 g (12 oz) icing (confectioners') sugar

30 ml (1 fl oz) water or redcurrant juice

natural pink colouring (if you don't use redcurrant juice)

desiccated coconut and/or hundreds and thousands, to garnish (optional)

For a 24 x 28 cm (9½ x 11¼ inch) cake tin

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

Put the butter and sugar in a bowl and beat until creamy. Add the eggs, one at a time, and make sure that each egg is completely incorporated before adding the next one. Add a teaspoon of the flour with the last egg to prevent the mixture from separating.

Carefully fold the remaining flour and the baking powder into the batter so that the volume is retained. Stir in the milk, a little at a time. Spoon the batter into the tin and smooth the top. Bake in the middle of the oven for 30–40 minutes. Allow the cake to cool completely.

For the icing, mix the icing sugar with the redcurrant juice or the water and the pink colouring.

Put the coconut and/or hundreds and thousands in a shallow bowl. Trim the cake edges. Spread the cake with the icing and cut it into 12 pieces, wiping the knife after each cut. Dip the cake pieces into the coconut or hundreds and thousands or just leave them plain.

It is best to eat this cake on the day it's made or the following day.

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.