

# IRISH SODA BREAD



Brian Medford

**This hearty recipe is a perfect addition to any holiday or everyday meal.**

BY BRIAN MEDFORD

I don't keep up with the holiday baking calendar splendidly. I never miss a Thanksgiving, after all pie is my peak baking performance, and I hit the 90% mark for Easter and Christmas, but beyond that it's spotty.

I'm not against baking for the holidays, but I think of baking as an everyday experience, not as a stressful event.

One friend, who is one of the most talented bakers I know, bakes cakes for every holiday. Even for holidays I have no clue even exist, my friend has a special recipe in her repertoire. Her daughter is one of the luckiest kids I know, growing up with a year-round calendar of holiday-inspired recipes.

Motivated by my friend, I've decided to add a few new holiday treats to my baking calendar. I'm starting with Irish soda bread. This recipe requires just a few inexpensive pantry ingredients. Early recipes called only for flour, buttermilk, salt and baking soda.

The invention of baking soda in the early

19th century was a revelation, allowing those without ovens to bake bread for the first time. Currants and caraway seeds, which are now customary additions, were luxury ingredients at the time and were added later.

Traditionally, the deep cross shape cut on the top of the soda bread before baking was to ward off evil and protect the household. My favorite Irish soda bread recipe uses whole wheat flour and adds a few frivolities including honey and old-fashioned oats. Currants or caraway are also nice additions to the loaf. Be sure to have plenty of salted Irish butter ready to slather on every single slice.

## Irish soda bread

*Adapted from Felicity Cloake, Makes one loaf.*

- Three 1/2 cups whole wheat flour
- 2/3 cup old fashioned oats
- One 1/4 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 tablespoons honey

- 2 cups buttermilk
- 2 tablespoons melted butter, to finish

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Line a baking sheet with parchment and set aside.

Place the dry ingredient into a large mixing bowl and whisk together to combine. Make a well in the middle.

Stir the honey into the buttermilk until well mixed, then pour this into the well and, very quickly, stir together until you have a soft, sticky dough.

Form this into a round on your baking sheet and cut a deep cross in the dough. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes until the crust is deep brown and the loaf sounds hollow when tapped underneath. Brush with melted butter and leave to cool before serving. Eat as soon as possible, as it doesn't stay fresh very long.

*Brian Medford is the owner of Idlewild Biscuits and Bakes in Astoria. He teaches cooking classes at The Pantry in Seattle. Contact him at [blmedford@gmail.com](mailto:blmedford@gmail.com)*

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