



ELECTION CAKES

WIN OR LOSE, THEY'RE DELICIOUS

What will you be eating on Election Day this November? How about an old-fashioned ELECTION CAKE with a good measure of history stirred in?

The Election Cake seems to have started in Hartford, Connecticut, about the year 1800. Soon it was being baked and enjoyed all over New England. For some time it was known as the Hartford Election Cake, but then became known simply as Election Cake. Some called it Republican Cake. Democrat or Republican, everyone enjoyed eating it.

The early receipts or recipes, as we now call them, require yeast and flour, sugar and eggs, lots of raisins or other dried fruit and plenty of spices. Fresh farm butter and a little milk was needed, too, plus a dash

of salt and perhaps a little wine or brandy. A very rich cake, especially with frosting to top it off.

If your candidate lost the election, it was a good idea to have some Election Cake on hand to give the sad supporters and cheer them up when they came to visit after the votes were counted.

If your candidate won, every guest who came to celebrate with you certainly hoped for a nice slice. Win or lose, what a treat!

If you think you'd like to bake some Election Cakes this year, you could test one of the following recipes for yourself.



ELECTION OR REPUBLICAN CAKE

5 cups (or) a pound of flour	5 eggs
3½ cups (or) one pound of sugar	½ pound raisins
1 cup (or) ½ pound of butter	1 teaspoonful soda
1 cup sweet cream or milk	2 teaspoons cream of tartar
Cinnamon & nutmeg	



SOFT FROSTING

To 1 cup of sugar add ½ cup of water and boil until it will harden in cold water. Then pour this on the whites of 2 eggs, which have been beaten light, and stir thoroughly.

(From an 1899 MONTPELIER DEWEY COOKBOOK)

The *Old Hartford Election Cake* recipe is typical of many found in old cookbooks. Measurements in gills (a unit for liquid measure equal to about four ounces or a quarter of a pint) and instructions advising the cook to “rub” the butter into the flour seem odd to us today. Directions that tell us that the milk to be added should be “hot in winter and blood warm in summer” seem even odder. Today our recipes tell us the necessary temperatures in thermometer readings.



OLD HARTFORD ELECTION CAKE

Five pounds dried and sifted flour, 2 pounds butter, 2 pounds sugar, 3 gills distilling yeast, or twice the quantity of home-brewed, 4 eggs, a gill wine and a gill brandy, ½ ounce nutmeg, 2 pounds fruit, 1 quart milk. Rub the butter into the flour, add half the sugar, then the yeast, then half the milk, hot in winter and blood warm in summer, the eggs well beaten, the wine and the remainder of the milk. Beat it well and let stand to rise all night. Beat it well in the morning, adding the brandy, sugar and spice. Let it rise 3 or 4 hours, till very light. Put the cake in buttered pans and put in the fruit as directed previously. If you wish it richer, add a pound of citron.

(From THE DOMESTIC RECEIPT BOOK, 1861)

NOTE: The recipes listed are taken directly from cookbooks written in the 1800s and do not always offer clear instructions. If you would like to try making either cake or the frosting ask an adult to help you. As a rule of thumb 1.) Dry ingredients should be combined; 2.) Butter should then be worked into the dry ingredients; 3.) Wet ingredients should then be slowly added; 4.) Lastly, dried fruit or nuts are added; 5.) Batter should be put in buttered pans and baked at 350° until done.

LANGUAGE OF THE HANDKERCHIEF



Most everyone has heard of sign language. The Indians used it and so do many people today. Perhaps you have tried it too.

Elegant ladies living in the late 1800s also used a sign language of sorts, but instead of using their hands to communicate with another person they used a handkerchief. Find a scarf or handkerchief and, using the code below, see if you can carry on a secret conversation.

Draw handkerchief across eyes - I am sorry
 Drop handkerchief - We will be friends
 Twirl handkerchief in both hands - I don't care
 Draw handkerchief across cheek - I love you
 Draw handkerchief through hands - I hate you
 Let handkerchief rest on right cheek - Yes
 Let handkerchief rest on left cheek - No
 Twirl handkerchief in left hand - Go away
 Fold handkerchief - I wish to speak to you
 Draw handkerchief over the right shoulder -
 Follow me
 Hold opposite corners of handkerchief in both
 hands - Wait for me
 Draw handkerchief across the forehead - We are
 being watched
 Let handkerchief remain over your eyes - You
 are mean
 Put handkerchief in your pocket - No more at
 present
 Crumple handkerchief up in your hand - I am
 impatient
 Touch handkerchief to right eye twice - Repeat
 your last signal