

SOUL CAKES

Soul cakes have long been a traditional part of Celtic Samhain celebrations as a gift for the spirits of departed loved ones. During the Middle Ages, soul cakes were adapted by Christians and were given in alms to those who went “souling” in exchange for prayers for the dead. Souling was a precursor to trick or treating and entailed people going house to house, during Allhallowtide (the triduum of Halloween, All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day), singing ancient rhymes and asking for soul cakes. Other customs associated with souling, included singing, dressing in disguise, carrying lanterns, and lighting bonfires, just to name a few.

As Halloween celebrations become more secular, this practice was adopted by children who would sing songs, recite poems or perform tricks for nuts, fruit and coins. By the 19th Century, the practice of dressing children in disguise had become a popular yearly event.

Whether you celebrate Samhain or Allhallowtide, soul cakes are a delicious way to add to your festivities!

Ingredients

3/4 cups fresh berries (whatever you can forage or have on hand)
1/2 cup roughly chopped hazelnuts
1 cup brown sugar
1 cup hot strong black tea (I used a combination of ginger & Earl Grey)
1 large egg
4 tablespoons butter
1 tsp of nutmeg
1 tsp cardamom
1 tsp cinnamon
A few tablespoons of chopped candied ginger (optional but tasty)
pinch of salt
2 1/2 cups of self-rising flour

Directions

Combine berries, nuts, spices and brown sugar. Add the hot tea, stir well, cover and allow to soak for an hour. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour a muffin/cupcake pan. Mix the egg and melted butter into your wet mixture, adding the flour in 1/2 cup batches, beating well after each edition. Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake until toothpick comes out clean (around 45 min.) Let cool in the pan before turning out.

Traditionally, before baking, these cakes were marked with a cross to signify that they were alms and included raisins or currants instead of fresh berries.

Recipe source: <https://gathervictoria.com/2016/10/29/soul-cakes-for-an-old-fashioned-all-hallows-eve/>

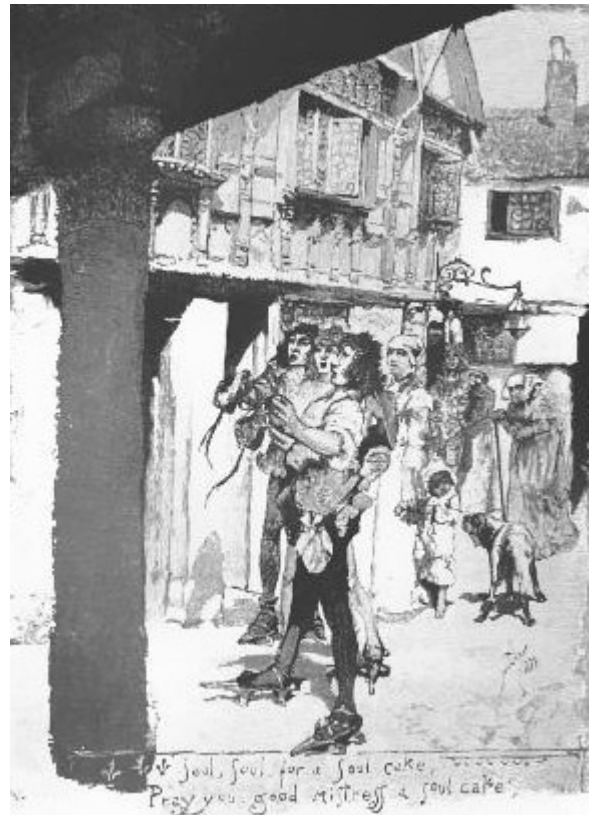


Image Source: "St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks", Scribner & Company, December 1882, p. 93