



RECIPE CARD WK3

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POTATO TORT

Don't be put off by the idea of a sweetened potato pie – it uses sweet potatoes, and it's a very spicy, rich, and typically early Georgian set of flavours.

Original recipe

Charles Carter, *The Complete Practical Cook*, 1730

Take a pound and a half Spanish potatoes; boil them and blanch them, and cut them in slices, not too thin; sheet a dish with puff paste, lay some citron in the bottom, lay over your potatoes, and season them with ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, and sugar; then take the marrow of two bones, cut it into pieces as big as walnuts, roll it in yolks of eggs, and season it as the potatoes; lay it in them, and between the lumps of marrow lay citron and dates slic'd, and eryngo roots, sprinkle over some sack and orange flower water; then drawn up a quart of cream boil'd with the yolks of ten eggs, and pour all over, bake it, and stick over some citron, and serve it.

Adapting the recipe for modern use

Most of the terms and ingredients in the original recipe are now known to us, so following it as a recipe is very possible (with a few ingredient switches).

Pre-cook 1½lb of sweet potatoes – peel them first. And when cool enough, slice them (not too thinly).

Lay a sheet of puff pastry in a dish, with some lemon zest. Add your potatoes, and season with ginger (you can either use crystallised ginger, or ground ginger), cinnamon, nutmeg and sugar

The recipe then calls for a stock of bone marrow: If you can't get bone marrow then replace it with some lumps of butter (don't worry about rolling them in egg yolks), and season as before. Add in lemon zest and sliced dates, but you will need to leave out the Eryngo roots (it's why crystallised ginger makes a good ginger option – so you still get that texture of crystallised root). Add a sprinkle of sack, which can be replaced by sherry, sweet brandy or ginger wine, and some orange flower water. Then make up a quart (two pints) of boiled cream, and add 5 egg yolks (eggs were much smaller at this time – so halve the quantity here). Pour this over the dish, and cook it at about 180°C until the custard is just cooked through.

RECIPE NOTES

One of the biggest conundrums in early modern cookery concerns potatoes. It's virtually impossible to know whether authors refer to the potato or the sweet potato. Generally, Spanish potato means a sweet version, and generally pre-1600 recipes probably mean a sweet potato. Equally, Virginia potato is usually a standard potato, and after 1800 a potato is usually a potato. But there's about 100 years of mild confusion, and it's further confused by the fact that the Jerusalem artichoke is also, sometimes, called a potato.



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PUDDINGS OF SEVERAL COLOURS

This is a fun recipe which calls for the same 'Quaking Pudding' recipe to be differently coloured in six ways, using natural ingredients: you can use food colouring if you prefer! Quaking Pudding is so called because it shakes when you move the plate. This is a real reminder of the level of effort historic cooking took before cooks' cheats and shortcuts came in, but it looks spectacular.

Original recipe

John Nott, *Cook's Dictionary*. 1726

Provide half a dozen wooden dishes with covers to them; butter the insides of them; fill one of them with the ingredients of a Quaking Pudding, which make thus: slice a Manchet, and scald it with a pint of cream; then put to it a pound of blanched almonds, powdred small with rose-water, with a quarter of a pound of dates sliced and cut small, a handful of currans boil'd and some marrow minc'd; beat these together and season them with salt, nutmeg and sugar, adding the yolks of half a dozen eggs: one of your wooden dishes being filled with these, put on the cover, and tye with a cloth; then colour some of the same pudding with spinage, and tye up that as the former; then mince cowslips, and mix that with another part of your pudding, and tye that up; mince a handful of clove july-flowers, and do the like by another; then mince violets and do the like by another dish; but after

these flowers are minced, they must be powdred in a mortar, and the juice must be mixed with the batter; when they are boiled, take them out of the dishes, and pour over them butter, vinegar, rosewater and sugar, scrape sugar over them and serve them up.

Adapting the recipe for modern use

Effectively you are making one big mix, then dividing it up and colouring it. You can, if you just want the effect, use food colouring – you would hardly have been able to taste the flowers used here.

Slice a Manchet, and scald it with a pint of cream.

Manchet is the finest white bread available at the time (do not use white sliced sandwich bread for this – baker's bread which has been yeast-risen will be more absorbent and taste better). You should make your bread into rough, fresh breadcrumbs and mix it into your hot cream gradually: it should be the consistency of very thick

cream when you pour it onto your eggs (if you do it the other way round, you will get scrambled eggs).

Then put to it a pound of blanched almonds, powdered small with rose-water, with a quarter of a pound of dates sliced and cut small, a handful of currans boil'd and some marrow minc'd; beat these together and season them with salt, nutmeg and sugar, adding the yolks of half a dozen eggs.

Mix it well – it should look like runny cottage cheese – and divide into as many parts as you have bowls, colours and willpower. Remember to halve the number of eggs (as Georgian eggs were much smaller).

One of your wooden dishes being filled with these, put on the cover, and tie with a cloth.

The puddings, boiled in wooden dishes, would have been identical in shape, just like those made in the later ceramic pudding basins – as anyone who has boiled a pudding just in a cloth will know, that level of consistency is hard to achieve otherwise – and quaking pudding is particularly delicate and prone to collapse. Cloths were in use by the late medieval period, but really got going in the 16th century. This is therefore quite an early use of what is effectively a pudding basin. You can use any mould or bowl.

Then colour some of the same pudding with spinage, and tie up that as the former; then mince cowslips, and mix that with another part of your pudding, and tie that up; mince a handful of clove july-flowers, and do the like by another; then mince violets and do the like by another dish; but after these flowers are minced, they must be powdered in a mortar, and the juice must be mixed with the batter.

The method used here to extract the colouring is to pound leaves or flowers in a pestle and mortar (a tiny bit of hot water helps free the colour) and then squeeze them in a cloth to extract the colour. Clove july-flowers are clove-gillyflowers (*dianthus caryophyllus*).

When they are boiled, take them out of the dishes, and pour over them butter, vinegar, rosewater and sugar, scrape sugar over them and serve them up.

Place the moulds into a deep baking dish and surround with hot water, enough to go half the way up the moulds. Cook at a low heat until the inside temperature of the pudding reaches 90°C. This will take about an hour. The puddings are ready when they have a slight wobble in the centre – they will firm up as they stand.