

SIMNEL CAKE

I'll to thee a Sminell bring,
"Gainst thou goest a-mothering
so that when she blesseth thee,
Half that blessing thou'lt give me."

-Robert Herrick

Simnell cakes, so called because of the fine flour (Latin "Simila") they were made of, were baked and sold on Lenten Sundays in both England and France. The French always baked their cakes muffin-sized and drew sugar crosses on the top. These were their equivalent of the English Hot Cross Buns.

In England, the simnel is especially associated with the 4th Sunday of Lent, called Refreshment, Rose, or Mothering Sunday. That day was the older version of our own Mother's Day. Children of all ages were expected to pay a formal visit to their mothers and to bring a simnel cake as a gift. In return, the mothers gave their children a special blessing. This custom was so well established that masters were required to give servants enough time off to visit out of town mothers, -provided the trip did not exceed five days!

We owe Lorraine McLean, wife of the Rector of St Georges's Oxon Hill Maryland for giving us this recipe. For years now our parish has followed the custom; begun by St. Georges' of serving simnel cake at our church coffee hour on Mothering Sunday.

Ingredients:

1 1/2 cup butter	4 cups sugar
4 cups flour	2/3 cup grated lemon and or orange peel
8 eggs	2 cups currants
1 teaspoon salt	8 oz of almond paste

Method:

Cream butter and sugar until smooth. Add eggs one by one, beating after each addition. Sift flour with salt and add. Dust peel and currants with some flour and add to the batter.

Line a 12 by 15 greased pan with waxed paper. Pour in 1/2 of the batter. Add a layer of almond past, and then add remaining batter.

Bake at 300 Degrees F for 1 hour. Cut into small pieces, as the cake is very rich.