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by Lydia Lovell

Beehive ovens, both the originals and reproductions, are sometimes found in antique houses on Cape Cod and other places, but Uncle Henry's house did not boast one, and Aunt Olivia did all her baking in a cast iron coal stove. If anyone had suggested to her that she might have better success baking in a masonry oven built into the chimneypiece next to her fireplace, I'm sure she would surely have thought him daft. Some modern purists, however, have either put their old beehive ovens back into service or, when remodeling or building anew, have had a reproduction constructed.

To ready a beehive oven for action, a hardwood fire is lit inside and burned at a high temperature until the bricks are very hot. The fire is then removed (a tricky process, that) and filled baking pans set inside the oven. Cookies and breads, because they require the highest heat for proper baking, are cooked first, then pies and cakes followed by puddings and other slow-baking dishes that are best when left for several hours in a cooling oven. Baked beans, Indian Pudding, and certain casseroles fall into that category.

Beehive ovens in this country, of course, were patterned after those found in England and Holland (as well as other parts of the Continent) in the 1600s. And recipes especially well-suited to them crossed the Atlantic in the brains of women who ventured to colonial America during the 17th and 18th centuries. A popular molded bread of the period, named for a young woman who, the story goes, sold hot loaves in the streets of Bath, England, is as delicious today as it was then. Early recipes for hot bread might give pause to a modern housewife, but more recent ones, developed for our use, are comparatively simple.

If you've a beehive oven and want to prepare authentic Sally Lunn, this is how it was done in the old days.

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| 5 teacups flour | 3 T. sugar |
| 1/2 teacup butter | 1/2 teacup yeast sponge |
| 1/2 teacup lard | 1 teacup sweet milk |
| 4 eggs, separated | pinch of salt |

In a large bowl, combine yeast and dry flour. Melt butter and lard in warm milk, cool, and add to flour. Beat egg yolks until light-colored, add sugar and beat well. Combine with dough. Fold in stiffly-beaten egg whites. Batter should be stiff enough to drop cleanly off a spoon. Cover with a tea towel and allow to rise until double. Punch down, cover, and let rise a second time. Punch down again; grease a mold or tube pan with butter; place dough evenly around tube. Let rise once more to double. Bake 50 minutes in moderate oven.

A note with this recipe indicates that half-a-day may be needed for the risings, so plan to devote yourself to your baking if you choose to follow these instructions.

Another hot bread of the same name is neither as sweet nor as rich as the first, but it may be easier to make. Although this is an ancient rule, the resulting Sally Lunn bakes perfectly in modern ovens.

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| 1/2 C. melted butter | 4 eggs |
| 1 C. warm milk | 1/2 t. baking soda |
| 1 pkg. dry yeast | 1 C. warm water |
| 1 t. salt | 4 C. flour |

In a small saucepan, melt butter, remove from heat, and add milk; add yeast and salt. In a large bowl, beat eggs to a stiff froth; add the milk mixture. Dissolve soda in water and add to eggs and milk. Stir in the flour and mix to a smooth batter.



Thoroughly butter a deep casserole dish, or a mold, or a tube pan. Fill with batter, cover with linen-napkin, and set to rise. Allow five to six hours for bread to double. Bake in a 350° oven for 45 to 50 minutes or until a testing toothpick comes out clean. Serve hot.

Better suited to modern practices and hours that modern cooks will devote to hot breads, Sally Lunn made this way may be preferable.

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| 3/4 C. warm milk | 3 T. sugar |
| 3/4 C. warm water | 2 eggs |
| 1 pkg. dry yeast | 3 C. flour |
| 6 T. butter | 1-1/4 t. salt |

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| 1 C. butter or margarine or corn oil | 2 C. flour |
| 1/4 C. sugar | 1 t. vanilla extract |
| | 1/2 t. salt |

In a medium-sized bowl, beat shortening and sugar together, creaming until mixture is light and fluffy. Blend in vanilla and salt. Gradually add flour, mixing well. Dough will be thick. Roll pieces of dough between your palms to shape and round balls about the size of a walnut. Place a dozen balls at least an inch apart on an ungreased cookie sheet. Using your thumb, indent the center of each cookie and fill hollow with a half-teaspoon of jam or jelly. Bake at 400° for 10 to 12 minutes, just until lightly browned.

If you bake these cookies in a beehive oven, put them in as soon as you remove the fire. They need a hot oven. But if you're baking in an ordinary kitchen range, simply set your thermostat for 400° and your timer for 10 minutes. Place one filled cookie sheet in the hot oven while you roll the next dozen balls and fill your pan. It takes less than an hour from start to finish to make about three-dozen Thumbprints.

Uncle Henry would have relished these cookies... each is just the right size for one mouthful. Result? No crumbs!

In a small saucepan, warm the milk and water to 110° and add yeast. Set aside until yeast dissolves. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar together, then add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. Stir in yeast mixture. Sift flour and salt together and add to batter, one cup at a time, beating until smooth after each addition. Cover bowl with a tea towel and set in a warm place to rise until double (about one hour). Punch down and turn batter into a well-buttered mold or a tube pan. Let rise until double (about 40 minutes) and bake at 350° for 40 to 45 minutes. Unmold and serve warm. The resulting bread is small than either of the two preceding ones. For a larger loaf, double the measurements, of course.

While your oven is hot, you may want to make tarts to serve with afternoon tea or morning coffee. Aunt Olivia baked them in her coal stove oven. Done in either beehive or conventional oven. Hidden Jewel Tarts are delectable.

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| 1 C. flour | 1/4 C. butter |
| 1 T. sugar | 1/4 C. milk, ice-cold |
| 1/4 t. salt | A variety of jellies |

In a medium-sized bowl, combine all ingredients except milk. Cut butter into flour. While tossing with fingers, gradually add milk to form dough ball. On a floured board, roll pastry about 1/8" thick, handling dough as lightly as possible. Cut circles with cookie cutter to fit 1-3/4" muffin pans. Pat pastry into wells. Place 1/4 teaspoon of a fruit jelly (strawberry, blueberry, apricot, or grape) in each pastry cup, using a different fruit for each tart. Then top with the following filling:

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| 2 eggs, lightly beaten | 4 t. flour |
| 2 T. dry sherry | 1/4 t. nutmeg |
| 3/4 C. sugar | 3/4 C. finely-chopped almonds |

Bake tarts at 350° about 25 minutes. Makes 24 small tarts.

To accompany tarts and to prove that a delicate and delicious cookie need not involve a great deal of work, stir up a batch of Thumbprint Jam Cookies, a recipe from the kitchen of Midge Leonard, one I'm sure Aunt Olivia would have used often had she known it.