

## From Aunt Olivia's Kitchen

by Lydia Lovell

As Uncle Henry often observed, "There are brownies and there are BROWNIES and while you can't always tell the difference by looking, it takes only one crumb to know which is which." Aunt Olivia made brownies to suit Uncle Henry, and they suited us, too. We weren't a bit fussy about brownies. The **Brownies** he liked best were made with butter, never margarine.

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| 1/4 lb. butter       | pinch of salt            |
| 2 C. sugar           | 4 oz. baking chocolate   |
| 4 beaten eggs        | 1 C. flour               |
| 1 t. vanilla extract | 1 C. broken walnut meats |

With electric beater, cream butter in medium-sized bowl, add sugar while beating; then add beaten eggs, salt, and vanilla, and beat until smooth. Meanwhile, melt chocolate with one teaspoon of butter over hot water. Let cool slightly, then stir chocolate into egg mixture. Stir in flour until just combined and fold in nut meats. Pour into a greased and floured 9"x13" baking pan and bake at 325° for 30 minutes or until brownies shrink away from the edges of the pan and the center springs back when touched gently with a finger tip. Cool and cut in squares.

Another favorite with everyone familiar with Aunt Olivia's goodies were those drop cookies she made especially to serve when she knew my mother would be stopping for tea. Often as not on those afternoons I came along as well, and Aunt Olivia knew her sister Cara's daughter was specially fond of **Chewy Drop Cookies**. She always made enough so we could take some home for my father and brother.

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|----------------|----------------------------|
| 1/4 lb. butter | 1/2 t. baking soda         |
| 2 C. sugar     | 1 t. cream of tartar       |
| 3 C. flour     | 1 t. vanilla extract       |
| 4 beaten eggs  | 1 C. walnuts, chopped fine |
| Pinch of salt  |                            |

Cream butter and sugar together. Add beaten eggs; sift flour, salt, soda, and cream of tartar together and add to first mixture. Add vanilla and fold in chopped nuts. Drop cookies from an oiled teaspoon onto a lightly-greased cookie sheet. Bake at 375° about 18 minutes or until golden. Half this recipe may yield plenty for your family.

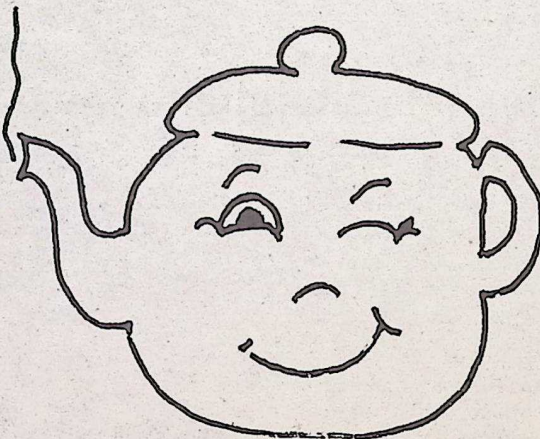
You were never sure, when you stopped at Aunt Olivia's on the way home from school in the afternoon, just what there might be in the way of refreshments. All you were certain about was that you'd be offered something substantial to carry you through until supertime and that Uncle Henry would put in his appearance just as your snack was ready. He'd hang his hat on the wall peg, wash his hands at the sink, and settle down in his arm chair at the kitchen table alongside Aunt Olivia. She would pass cookies or brownies or

gingersnaps, or a plate heaped with slices of homemade bread spread with butter and jelly. Aunt Olivia offered him a choice of tea, coffee, or milk, and often he took milk to keep me company, but Aunt Olivia almost always chose a cup of tea.

The three of us... four if my mother was there too... while swapping stories and telling all that had happened since yesterday, could polish off a batch of cookies in no time.

I'd tell what had happened in school, and Uncle Henry would tell what had happened around the place. Once, I remember, he reported that a baby screech owl had somehow gotten down the chimney and how he rescued it. And Aunt Olivia described the red squirrel coming to the bird bath for water. And Uncle Henry told about the little mouse they had seen in the buttery the night before last and showed me the trap he had set. And I shared details of why my cat woke me up in the night, growling at something outside. A skunk.

Once in a while, Aunt Olivia made crumpets. She always said she made them to 'keep her hand in' but, thinking back, I believe she made them because she liked them herself and they made her feel a bit nostalgic about her English heritage. A flat muffin dotted with yeasty craters, a crumpet is cooked on a griddle and served hot, slathered with butter and marmalade. Traditionally, metal rings four inches in diameter are heated on the griddle and batter spooned in them to cook. If you scrub tuna fish cans and remove their tops and bottoms, you can use them for making **Crumpets**.



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|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1/4 C. lukewarm water | 1 egg              |
| 1 pkg. dry yeast      | 1-1/2 C. flour     |
| 1 t. sugar            | 1/4 t. salt        |
| 1/2 C. Milk           | 2 T. melted butter |

In a medium-sized mixing bowl combine lukewarm water, yeast, and sugar. Set aside for 10 minutes. Combine milk and egg with yeast mixture. Add flour, salt, and butter and beat for two minutes with an electric mixer or three minutes with a wooden spoon until batter is smooth. Cover the bowl with a sheet of wax paper and a linen tea towel and set in a warm place (under an electric light is an ideal spot) for about an hour or until batter has swelled to double its bulk. Stir down.

Heat oiled griddle or electric skillet to moderate temperature. Butter the rings and arrange, almost touching, on the surface. Allow rings to heat up before using a large kitchen spoon to drop spoonfuls of batter into each ring. Bubbles will form on the surface of the crumpets, just as they do on pancakes when it's time to turn them; the bottoms should be light brown when the bubbles form. Remove the rings and flip the crumpets to brown the other side. Yield: a dozen crumpets.

Crumpets can be served hot from the griddle or reheated in a toaster oven. Strawberry jam might be even better than marmalade, but a choice is perfectly lovely. Three crumpets and two cups of strong hot tea (and if you're English, you'll take milk, if you please) will sustain you until the dinner hour.

A melt-in-your-mouth concoction best described by Uncle Henry in a jocular mood as "sweetened air," are quick to mix, easy to prepare, and take hours and hours to cook. But they don't need watching. Just stick them in the oven, turn off the heat, and go out for the afternoon and evening. Or go to bed and remove them from the oven the next morning. Not English, these, but French through and through: **Meringues**.

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| 2 egg whites                   | 1 C. chocolate bits  |
| 2/3 C. sugar                   | 1 C. chopped walnuts |
| 1 t. vanilla or almond extract |                      |

Preheat oven to 350°. Beat egg whites until frothy and, while continuing to beat, add sugar a tablespoonful at a time until all sugar is added and peaks form. Fold in chocolate bits, finely-chopped walnuts, and vanilla. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto a cookie sheet covered with a sheet of brown paper cut from a grocery bag. Put cookie sheet in heated oven and turn the oven OFF. Do not open oven door for at least four hours. Yield: 60 meringues.

While the English prefer crumpets with their tea, a good Scot wants scones with his. Aunt Olivia's recipe for Scottish Scones was given her by a native of Midlothian County, not far from the city known as Auld Reekie (Edinburgh). Elsie had come to the United States, a war bride, shortly after the first World War ended; she brought traditional Scottish recipes across the Atlantic and shared them with adventure-some cooks who were her neighbors on Cape Cod. **Elsie's Cream Scones**, served hot with beach plum jelly, make a tea fit for a Scottish queen.

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|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2 C. flour             | 6 T. butter (NOT margarine)     |
| 1 T. baking powder     | 2 eggs                          |
| 1/2 t. salt            | 1/2 C. cream or evaporated milk |
| 1/4 C. sugar (divided) |                                 |

Have all ingredients at room temperature. Sift flour and

Have all ingredients at room temperature. Sift flour and measure it. Put measured flour in sifter and add baking powder, salt, and half of the sugar. Sift those dry ingredients into a medium-sized mixing bowl. Add butter and cut it into flour until mixture is like coarse meal. In a small bowl, beat eggs slightly and stir in the cream or evaporated milk. Reserve two teaspoons of egg mixture and pour the rest into the flour mixture, stirring only until just mixed. Turn batter out onto lightly floured board and knead dough lightly for 30 seconds. Form into a rectangle 7"x14". Brush with the reserved egg mixture and sprinkle with remaining sugar. Cut into six squares, 3-1/2" in size, then cut in half diagonally, forming 12 triangles. Use spatula to lift onto a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 425° until lightly browned. Yield: 12 scones.

None of us, not even Uncle Henry, could ever reach a firm decision about which of the treats Aunt Olivia served with afternoon tea was the very best. We liked them all and we enjoyed the variety no matter what Aunt Olivia decided to make for us. We didn't even mind when she experimented!

Afternoon tea is a habit that's easy to form and, if your family gets famished in the late afternoon, it's a delightful way to tide everyone over 'til dinnertime.