

18th Century Independence Cake

Amelia Simmons' *American Cookery* is the first known cookbook written by a U.S. citizen (after independence). Little is known about Simmons or the story of this cookbook other than its publish date in 1796, just 20 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The original recipe for Independence Cake appeared as follows:

Independence Cake.
Twenty pound flour, 15 pound sugar,
10 pound butter, 4 dozen eggs, one quart
wine, 1 quart brandy, 1 ounce nutmeg,
cinnamon, cloves, mace, of each 3 ounces,
two pound citron, currants and raifins 5
pound each, 1 quart yeast; when baked,
frost with loaf sugar; drefs with box and
gold leaf.

Try making your own Independence Cake using this recipe (with more modern quantities):

Ingredients:

- 2/3 cup warm water (105 to 115°F)
- 1 packages of active dry yeast (1/4 ounce)
- pinch of sugar
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 cups firmly packed brown sugar
- (8 oz) 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 1 cup raisins
- 1/4 cup finely chopped dried cherries (use figs for the original recipe, or any dried fruit that you prefer)

Directions:

- 1) Preheat oven to 350°F. Put warm water in the bowl of a stand mixer, then add the yeast, sprinkling it to cover the top. Sprinkle a pinch of sugar on top of the yeast and allow to stand for about 5 minutes.
- 2) Mix the flour with the baking powder, cinnamon, salt, ginger, and nutmeg. Set aside.
- 3) If yeast has dissolved and is beginning to bubble, add the one cup of flour mixture, stirring it in thoroughly. Add butter and mix well.
- 4) Add sugar, buttermilk, and vanilla. Mix until well combined. Add the eggs and mix until just combined.
- 5) Mix in the flour, reserving one tablespoon. Toss the raisins and cherries in tablespoon of flour and then fold them into the cake batter.
- 6) Put the batter into a greased bundt pan. Loosely cover the pan with a tea towel and allow to rise for about 1 1/2 hours.
- 7) Bake cake for 50-60 minutes or until a cake tester comes out clean. Place pans on wire rack to cool, then carefully remove from pan after a few minutes.

Make sure to send us a photo of your cake! You can email it to us (info@brickstoremuseum.org) or tag us on social media (@[brickstoremuseum](https://www.instagram.com/brickstoremuseum))