

# Bake your way through Holy Week

Facebook feeds have been full of people 'comfort baking' as it turns out that baking makes you feel less stressed, and the nice thing about it is that not only is it good for the person making the treats, but also a nice surprise for everyone else in the household who gets to eat them!

I thought it might be a fun idea to share a recipe for each day in Holy Week, as a way of marking the time, and as a way of practicing mindful reflection as our busy hands allow our hearts and minds to be still.



## Palm Sunday – Date Slice

A retro treat for you today, to kick off Holy Week, using dates from date palms, as palms were waved as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, and they give today its name. We're going to make **Date Slices**.

### Preparation

With the rack in the middle position, **preheat the oven to 180 °C**. Line a 20-cm (8-inch) square baking dish with a strip of parchment paper, letting it hang over both sides.

### The Filling

- 2 1/2 cups (425 g) Medjool dates pitted and chopped (lightly packed) - *If you can't find Medjool dates, use regular dried dates.*
- 1 cup (250 ml) water
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) lemon juice
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp baking soda

In a pot, bring the dates, water, lemon juice, and brown sugar to a boil. Add the baking soda and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, or until the dates have fallen apart. Let cool.

### The Crisp

- 1 3/4 cups (175 g) quick-cooking oats

- 1 cup (150 g) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup (160 g) brown sugar
- 1/4 tsp baking powder
- 3/4 cup (170 g) semi-salted butter, softened

In a bowl, combine the oats, flour, brown sugar, and baking powder. Add the butter and stir to combine.

### Assembly and Baking

Spread half the crisp in the baking dish and press firmly, and as you do so, remember the cloaks that the crowd threw to the ground for Jesus and his donkey to walk over.

Spread the dates over this, and then add the other half of the mixture.

With each layer that you spread, imagine something from your life that you are placing beneath the feet of Jesus, just as the crowd did back then.



**Bake for 55 minutes or until the crisp is golden brown.** Let cool on a wire rack for 4 hours. Unmould and cut into 16 squares.

Enjoy them with a hot drink and sing a song or a hymn that fits the story for today- 'We have a king who rides a donkey', or 'Ride on, ride on in majesty' are two that come to mind for me.

## Monday of Holy Week – Rocky Road

For this Monday of Holy Week, I am choosing to remember the story of Jesus in the temple. Not the boy Jesus, getting lost and being found in the temple, his Father's house, discussing the law and the prophets with wisdom far beyond his years. This story is the one where Jesus enters the temple and finds it full of people buying and selling, and cheating each other. He thunders, 'This place is meant to be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves!' Sometimes we feel that anger isn't a very Christian emotion but feeling righteous anger can be a very holy thing indeed, if it causes us to act and to change things that need changing.

Today's treat is **Rocky Road**, the ingredients you will need are;

- 200g digestive biscuits (Rich Tea can also be used)
- 135g butter or margarine
- 200g dark chocolate (70% cocoa works best)
- 2-3 tbsp golden syrup
- 100g mini marshmallows (chopped regular marshmallows work too)

Plus, a selection of options from below (up to 100g)

- raisins, dried cranberries or any dried fruit, nuts
- popcorn
- honeycomb, broken into pieces
- crunchy breakfast cereal

**Put the biscuits in a bag and bash them with a rolling pin** until they're well smashed up. As you bash, bring to mind the injustices in the world that you feel angry about.

**Melt the butter or margarine with the chocolate and golden syrup.** You can get away with less chocolate if you can't find much - or have eaten your emergency cooking chocolate stash - by adding a bit more butter, some sugar, preferably light brown muscovado, and cocoa powder instead.

**Tip the biscuits into the melted mixture, along with the marshmallows and up to 100g of other yummy stuff you've got in your cupboard.** Dried fruit is good, as is hoop cereal. Maybe you've got some chocolate chips, or some chocolate confectionary bars that could be chopped up and added in?

As you add all your different ingredients, think about the different ways in which people find solutions to problems in the world. Mix it all together, and tip it into a baking tin, smoothing it right into the corners.

**Chill in the fridge for a couple of hours** and then cut slices to eat, as you chat together about where you see that things are wrong, and ways in which you can work for God's justice and peace.



## Tuesday of Holy Week – 'Heart' Biscuits

Jesus not only smashed things up in the temple, but also returned to it to share teaching with those inside. One of the things he spoke about was the law. Jesus summed up the entirety of the books of the law with two simple and easy to remember ideas- love God, and love your neighbour. Simple and easy to remember; not so easy to do in practice!

Today we'll make **heart shaped biscuits** to remind us of Jesus' summary of the law.

Cream together **250g of butter or margarine** and **260g of caster sugar**. Mix in **one egg** and a **teaspoon of vanilla essence**. Add **1 teaspoon of baking powder** and **½ teaspoon of salt** to **650g of plain flour**, then add this a little at a time to the butter and sugar mixture. There's quite a lot of flour to get through, so add it bit by bit and work it in carefully. Let the dough chill in the fridge for half an hour before rolling it out.

While the dough is chilling, draw a heart shape on a piece of paper. We are going old-fashioned style for these biscuits, because I'm assuming you don't have a drawer of random biscuit cutters that have just been waiting for this moment. If you do have a heart shaped cutter, feel free to ignore me for this paragraph! My ancient baking book assumes nobody has shaped cutters, and suggests that you draw a template, then use it by laying it on the dough and cutting round it with a knife. And this really does work fine, much better than you'd expect. If you'd like to be a bit more high tech, fashion a heart shape out of a strip of card, and tape it together. Wrap this all in aluminium foil, and voila! Your own bespoke heart cutter!



You all back with me now? Good. Roll out the dough, and cut out heart shapes. You'll need an even number- why? You'll find out in a minute.

Pop them on a baking tray, and into an oven at **180 degrees/Gas Mark 4** for **about ten minutes**, then leave them to cool.

**Mix up some buttercream icing.** I can't give you measurements for this because I do it by eye and by intuition! Apologies. Basically spoon yourself some butter or margarine into a bowl, add a good heap of icing sugar and beat it in. Keep adding more icing sugar until it feels nice and thick. If you have some pink or red food colouring in the cupboard, add a little of this, too. You're going to use the icing to sandwich the biscuits together, two at a time. With each biscuit, you can remember Jesus's words as you stick them together- Love God, and Love your neighbour.

As you have a cup of tea and share them, maybe virtually with family and friends, you can talk together about ways in which you keep both of those laws.

## Wednesday of Holy Week – Anzac Biscuits

The Wednesday of Holy Week is often the day in which we remember Judas, agreeing to betray Jesus for the price of thirty pieces of silver. I don't have a recipe for thirty pieces of silver, but maybe thirty pieces of **golden Anzac biscuit** will do instead? Judas was a passionate man with a strong belief in freedom, and strong ideas about what it would look like and how it would come about. There is nothing wrong with having strong ideas and being passionate about things, but as with Judas, we need to ensure that we keep listening to God, to hear his solutions, his timings, and to see his kingdom in his way.

### Ingredients

- 85g porridge oat
- 85g desiccated coconut
- 100g plain flour
- 100g caster sugar
- 100g butter or margarine, plus extra for greasing
- 1 tbsp golden syrup
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda



**Pre-heat your oven to 180C/fan 160C/gas 4.**

Put the dry ingredients - oats, coconut, flour and sugar in a bowl.

Melt the butter or margarine, and golden syrup together in a small pan - allow yourself to give some of your rigid ideas of ways things should be done over to God, and as the butter melts, remind yourself to listen to God for his ways, and his timings.

Add the bicarbonate of soda to 2 tablespoons boiling water, then stir into the golden syrup and butter mixture.

Make a well in the middle of the dry ingredients and pour in the butter and golden syrup mixture. Stir gently to incorporate the dry ingredients.

Put dessert spoonful's of the mixture on to buttered baking sheets, about 2.5cm/1in apart to allow room for spreading. Bake in batches for 8-10 mins until golden. Transfer to a wire rack to cool.

Eat, thoughtfully, with a hot drink, remembering how easy it can be to fool ourselves into believing we are doing the right thing, and how hard it can be to trust that God's timing is right.

## Maundy Thursday – Charoset Turnovers

On Maundy Thursday, we sometimes celebrate with a seder meal, the meal of the Jewish festival of Passover. It's very possible that Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover meal, and the edible re-enacting that goes on in this is a great way of understanding the story of Exodus, and also of putting some of the things said and done at the Last Supper into a context.

One of the dishes on the Seder plate is charoset, a mixture of apples, walnuts, cinnamon, and honey, to look like the mortar and clay bricks the Israelites had to build while slaves in Egypt. I thought this would be rather tasty inside a turnover.

First up, then, you'll need to make yourself some pastry. And if it's a turnover, it really needs to be **rough-puff pastry**, doesn't it! So, stick **120g of butter in the freezer**, and cut **50g of chilled butter into cubes**. Tip the butter cubes into a bowl containing **300g plain flour and a pinch of salt**, and rub them in using your fingertips until the mixture looks like breadcrumbs. **Add a little water** until it forms into a dough, and roll it out into a rectangle.

Get the butter out from the freezer, and grate half of it onto the bottom two thirds of the dough. Fold the uncovered part of dough down over the grated butter, then fold the bottom part up over the top. Turn it a quarter turn, roll it out again, and repeat this - grate butter over the bottom two thirds, fold down the top, fold up the bottom.

All that hard work rolling and grating and wrapping can get you thinking of the way the Israelites had to work as slaves in Egypt, mixing mud for bricks, moulding it, stacking it, all under the hot sun. Think of what you feel enslaved to, that you need freedom from, and begin to feel the same tug towards freedom felt by people throughout the generations. Wrap it all up, and leave it in the fridge to chill while you get on with making the **charoset**.

For this, finely chop up a couple of **apples**, and mix with some chopped **walnuts** if you have some hiding in your cupboard, some **cinnamon** or another spice, and some **honey**. Mix it until it forms a lumpy brownish paste.

Roll the pastry out and cut it into 15cm squares. Brush each square with egg wash; spoon apple mixture onto center of each. Fold each in half diagonally to form a triangle; press edges together to seal. Use back of fork to crimp edges, and prick a little hole in the middle of the bulge for the steam to escape. You might like to brush these with milk or egg, and maybe sprinkle on some demerara sugar to give them an extra crunch, before baking them for **20-25minutes at 200C/Gas Mark 6**.

Eat them, as free people, reclining to your left as you do when celebrating a seder meal. Only non-slaves could eat while reclining, and you can eat these with joy in your heart, knowing that freedom is coming for all of God's people.

**N.B.** You can cheat and use ready-made puff pastry, but it really isn't the same!



## Good Friday – Hot Cross Buns

What else could we cook today apart from Hot Cross Buns! The great thing about making a yeasted bun, is that it's something you spend time with, and then come back to, over time. Some church traditions have a service between 12 and 3, marking the hours Jesus spent on the cross - you might like to spend that time prayerfully making hot cross buns, with each time you come back to the baking, stepping back into the story, re-immersing yourself in the pain and the wonder of Good Friday.

### For the buns

- 300ml full-fat milk, plus 2 tbsp more
- 50g butter
- 500g strong bread flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 75g caster sugar
- 1 tbsp sunflower oil
- 7g sachet fast-action or easy-blend yeast
- 1 egg, beaten
- 75g sultanas
- 50g mixed peel
- zest 1 orange
- 1 apple , peeled, cored and finely chopped
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon

### For the cross

- 75g plain flour, plus extra for dusting

### For the glaze

- 3 tablespoons of apricot jam or marmalade

The first job you need to do to make hot cross buns is to heat up some milk and some butter.

**Bring 300ml full-fat milk to the boil, then remove from the heat and add 50g butter. Leave to cool until it reaches hand temperature.**



As the butter melts and mixes in with the milk, you might like to think of the moment in the Eucharist when the priest mixes a little water in with the wine, and prays, 'by the mystery of this wine and water, may we share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity'. The Jesus we follow, being both fully human and fully God, undergoing today the most brutal of human punishments.

**Put 500g strong bread flour, 1 tsp salt, 75g caster sugar and 7g sachet fast-action or easy-blend yeast into a bowl.** As you add the dry ingredients, think through what you are laying at the foot of the cross today.

**Make a well in the centre, pour in the warm milk and butter, and add an egg.** Mix this well, first with a wooden spoon, then with your hands, until you have a sticky dough.

Now for the fun bit! Sprinkle some flour onto a surface, and knead it, by stretching and folding, until it's turned nice and silky and pulls out smoothly. Put the dough in a lightly oiled bowl. Cover with oiled cling film and **leave to rise in a warm place for 1 hour** or until doubled in size and a finger pressed into it leaves a dent.

**After an hour, it's time to add the dried fruit and spices,** so that the hot cross buns taste like the real deal.

I don't know what you've got in your house. Certainly don't be heading out to buy stuff specially! If we can't glory in a bit of a bodge job at the moment, when else can we? I've got some sultanas and raisins, but no currants. I don't have peel either, though do have some oranges, so might chop the orange peel up small and include that. I doubt I'll actually get round to crystallising it myself in a sugar solution, but if that sounds like fun, you go for it! A chopped up apple would do for fruit if your dried fruit is scarce.

I've got a tub of cinnamon, but mixed spice, or ground cloves, or even ground ginger would probably do. 1 teaspoon of spice should do it. I'll leave it to you to put in as much dried fruit as you fancy - I seldom measure it anyway even in times of plenty! Knead these into the dough, as you do so remember the way Jesus was pummelled at the hands of the soldiers, and of how dough needs to be pummelled before it can begin to rise, and to turn into bread to feed us all.

**Leave to rise for 1 hour more,** or until doubled in size, again covered by some well-oiled cling film to stop the dough getting a crust.

**Divide the dough into 15 even pieces** (about 75g per piece). Roll each piece into a smooth ball on a lightly floured work surface. Arrange the buns on one or two baking trays lined with parchment, leaving enough space for the dough to expand. **Cover (but don't wrap) with more oiled cling film, or a clean tea towel, then set aside to prove for 1 hour more.**

**Heat oven to 220C/200C fan/gas 7.**

**Mix 75g plain flour with about 5 tbsp water** to make the paste for the cross – add the water 1 tbsp at a time, so you add just enough for a thick paste. Spoon into a piping bag with a small nozzle. Pipe a line along each row of buns, then repeat in the other direction to create crosses. Remember Jesus and his words on the cross, and quietly thank him for his sacrifice.

**Bake for 20 mins on the middle shelf of the oven, until golden brown.**

**Once out of the oven, gently heat some marmalade or apricot jam, and paint this over the top of them to make a sticky glaze.** Enjoy, buttered if you like, with a cup of tea, and sing or listen to your favourite songs or hymns about the cross as you eat them.



## Holy Saturday – Pineapple Upside-down Cake

A quiet day today. A day of quiet anticipation for us; a day of quiet despair for the disciples. And a day where marvellous things were about to happen, unseen. A day where the world was about to be turned upside-down.

So what better to make than **pineapple upside-down cake**? You start by creating the glaze and the decoration, but right in the bottom of the tin.

**Mix together 50g butter or margarine, and 50g light brown sugar, and spread this over the bottom of a cake tin and a little way up the sides.**

Open a tin of **pineapple rings**, and place these in a lovely pattern all over the base, putting **glace cherries** in each hole. Here is all our glorious hope for Easter- but we can't see it yet. We're going to hide it under some sponge cake mixture.

**Mix together 100g butter or margarine, 100g caster sugar, and 100g self-raising flour, along with 1 tsp baking powder, 1tsp vanilla essence, 2 eggs, plus two tablespoons of the juice or syrup from the pineapples** (you can drink the rest- baker's treat).

Pour this over the pineapples and glace cherries, until they are completely covered, just like Jesus' body, hidden from sight behind the great stone at the entrance to his tomb.

**Bake for 35 minutes at 180 degrees/Gas Mark 4**, then take out of the oven. Carefully without burning yourself, up-end it onto a plate. All that hidden beauty and colour can now be seen, like the life that bursts into the world again at springtime, like the life of Jesus that fills the world with love and goodness.



Eat with ice cream if your sweet tooth can bear it and talk about times you felt all hope was lost, and of the joy that came after weeping.

## Easter Sunday – Resurrection Rolls

Hopefully, some of us will be able to celebrate Easter Day in church this year, but it will undoubtedly be much scaled back due to the ongoing Corona virus restrictions; so why not take the opportunity to bake an Easter day treat!

If you have managed to buy chocolate eggs, enjoy them! This recipe is something quite different, and is, in fact, a chocolate free zone. You'll need **marshmallows**, a tin of **ready made croissant mix**, **melted butter**, **a bowl of sugar and cinnamon**, and **a bun tin**. If you can't find croissant mix, I reckon you can get away with making some bog standard shortcrust pastry.

**Pick up a marshmallow**. This is the body of Jesus, taken down from the cross on Good Friday. **Dip the marshmallow in the melted butter and the cinnamon and sugar**. This is what normally happened to a body before it was buried- it was anointed with sweet smelling spices and oils as a mark of respect, but this didn't happen with Jesus, his burial was all in too much of a rush before sundown at the start of Sabbath. This is what the women, arriving early in the morning, were planning to do, a couple of days late.

**Wrap the marshmallow up inside a triangle of croissant mix, making sure there aren't any holes, and dip this dough ball in melted butter and the cinnamon and sugar mix**. This is like the body being wrapped in graveclothes. Pop it in a hole in the bun/muffin tin and bake them all in a **hot oven (190 C) for 10-15 minutes**. The oven is like the tomb.



When you open the oven again, give the buns a few minutes to cool slightly, then eat them hot. As you break them open, discover what has happened to the body inside! It is gone! Just like the women arriving early to anoint Jesus's body, who discovered that instead of a body resting in a tomb, there was an empty space, angels, and Jesus, very much alive.

