

COMMON BUSH TEA CAKES

A 19th-Century Maple Recipe

This recipe is based on one included in Catharine Parr Traill's book *The Female Emigrant's Guide*, published in 1854. Traill herself emigrated from England to Canada in 1832, and she wrote her book to help other women adapt to the new conditions they would find in what is now Ontario. Traill provided advice on basic household skills such as knitting, making candles and soap, and baking bread, as well as advice that was specific to Canada: how to grow and cook with corn, how to find and prepare local foodstuffs, such as "Indian rice" and wild berries, and of course, how to make maple sugar.

Alice Miner's mother, Louisa Saunders, arrived in Canada from England in 1849, and married Bernard Trainer in 1850. As a young woman with a growing family, she would have been an ideal reader of Traill's book. Perhaps Mrs. Trainer made these cookies for Alice and her brothers and sisters!



Catharine Parr Traill
1802-1899

Ingredients:

- 1 1/4 cup maple sugar
- 1/4 cup warm water
- 4 cups flour (whole wheat, white, or a mix)
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tbsp. caraway seeds
- 1 1/2 cups soft unsalted butter

Directions:

1. In a small bowl, dissolve the maple sugar in the warm water (or you can use maple syrup).
2. Measure the flour, baking soda, salt, and caraway seeds into a large bowl and blend together. Using your fingertips, lightly rub the butter into the flour mixture. Make a well in the center.
3. Pour the maple sugar into the flour mixture. Blend well and knead lightly until the dough forms a nice ball. Divide into three sections. (You may want to refrigerate two as you work with the third.)
4. Roll the dough on a lightly floured surface to about 1/4" thickness. Cut with a 2" cookie cutter or drinking glass.
5. Bake on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper at 350° for 18 to 20 minutes, until nicely golden brown. Makes about 48 cookies.

From *Catharine Parr Traill's The Female Emigrant's Guide: Cooking with a Canadian Classic*, edited by Nathalie Cook and Fiona Lucas