

Plum Duff

Plum Duff, was a treat for sailors who served on board ships like *Constitution*. This recipe comes from Sandra Oliver's *Saltwater Foodways* (Mystic, Connecticut, Mystic Seaport Museum: 1995) and is delicious. Like most batter puddings boiled in a cloth, its exterior is gummy, but inside the texture is moist and cake-like.

Ingredients

2 cups flour	¼ cup sugar
½ teaspoon baking soda	⅔ cup raisins
1 teaspoon cream of tartar	⅔ cup water
pinch of salt	1 pudding bag or cloth
¼ cup melted shortening	

Directions

1. Set a large pot of water on and heat to boiling.
2. Sift together dry ingredients.
3. Stir in melted shortening, sugar, and raisins. Wet the pudding bag or cloth in the boiling water, and dust it liberally with flour.
4. Add the water to the dough and mix well; the dough should be fairly thick, but not stiff. Turn into the pudding bag, tie the bag leaving room for the duff to expand. Or put in a greased pudding mold.
5. Put the duff in the boiling water, suspending it by tying it to a spoon if necessary to keep it from touching the bottom of the pot.
6. If in a bag boil for four hours; steam for five hours if in a mold.
7. When done, turn it out of the cloth onto a serving dish. Let it stand a moment to set up.
8. Slice it and serve with molasses.

Serves 12

* History Note

If overcooked, Sailors Duff will come out very hard. According to Dr. Edward Cutbush in his *Observations on the Means of Preserving the Health of Soldiers and Sailors*, (Philadelphia: Fry and Krammer, 1808), “the puddings, generally made by the men, are almost as hard as a thirty two pound shot; if they receive no nourishment from them, it is certain they cannot complain that they have not something in their *stomachs that they can feel*; and sometimes, among those whose digestive powers are weak, violent pains of colic are the consequence.” Regardless of the dangers to one’s digestive tract, cut into slices and served with molasses, duff provided a welcome respite from salt meat and biscuit.