

Portugal Cakes

Hannah Glasse, *The Complete Confectioner; or Housekeeper's Guide*, 1800 ed.

A dish like Portugal cakes may have been served at meals or at tea. No one is quite sure where Portugal cakes get their name. In the 1700s, the word “cake” could mean a cake or a cookie or muffin. They may be named Portugal because the recipe came from Portugal or because they get orange when cooked and oranges were sometimes called portugals.

Original Recipe: Put a pound of fine sugar, a pound of fresh butter, five eggs, and a little mace, beaten, into a broad pan; beat it with your hands until it is very light and looks curdling; then put thereto a pound of flour; and half a pound of currants very dry; beat them together, fill tin pans, and bake them in a slack oven. You may make seed cakes the same way, only put in caraway seeds instead of currants.

For Our Kitchen:

1 ¼ c. sugar

½ lb. (2 sticks) butter

3 eggs

2 c. all-purpose flour

Mace or nutmeg to taste

Handful of currants, raisins or caraway seeds

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Cream the butter and sugar together.
3. Add the eggs and mace. Beat until well mixed and there is some air trapped in the mixture.
4. Add flour and currants. Mix together well.
5. Grease a biscuit or muffin tin and bake for 40 minutes until done.

Note: This recipe is very close to the 18th-century method of making the dish and, so, will not rise much. The amount of rise will come from the amount of air trapped in the batter. If you want a lighter muffin, substitute self-rising for all-purpose flour, and you will not have to mix so vigorously.