

Diet cures mair than doctors

Oats to the Scot is what snow is to the Eskimo – something that requires many words to describe the range. Oats are prepared in various forms and consistencies and can be mixed with anything from water or milk to butter, cream, animal fat, ale, or whisky. It is served as a savoury meal with the addition of meat, fish, and vegetables or as a sweet with fruit, cream, honey and treacle. And it is an all-day food and dished out in the morning as breakfast, in the middle of the day as dinner, and at night as supper.

Since oats are a staple grain, and grown in all corners of the country, it makes sense that there are a great variety of recipes that use oatmeal as the main ingredient. Each is typically easy to prepare and usually, more often than not, involves just one pot or pan, whether the dish is served hot or cold.

Bannocks

150g of rolled oats
115g of all-purpose flour
One teaspoon of baking soda
Three quarters teaspoon of salt
175 ml of buttermilk
Dessert spoonful of butter

Finely grind the oats. Transfer to a bowl and whisk in the flour, baking soda and salt. Mix in the buttermilk until a dough is formed. Knead the dough and form into an 8-inch disc. Heat a girdle or frying pan over a low heat. Melt the butter and placed the disc in the pan and cook the bannock for 15 minutes on each side. Divide into four wedges.

Sauty Bannocks

A pancake that was very popular on Fastern's E'en (Shrove Tuesday). Sauty is derived from the French word sauté which means to fry lightly.

175g oatmeal
½ teaspoon of salt
½ teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda
1 teaspoon of sugar
1 teaspoon of treacle
300 ml of buttermilk
1 egg
1 dessert spoon of caraway seeds

Mix the dry ingredients. Stir the syrup into the milk and blend into the dry ingredients. Leave to prove overnight. Beat the egg and add to the mix. If the batter is too thick add a little more milk. Pour a tablespoon of the batter on to a hot girdle or frying pan, tilting to make a thin even round. Cook on both sides until golden brown. Finish with a sprinkle of caraway seeds. Stack in a tea towel on a wire rack.

Crunchie Oat Biscuits

90g rolled oats
60g plain flour
60g butter
60g granulated sugar

One level tablespoon of golden syrup
Half a level teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda

Mix the oats and flour. Melt the butter with the sugar and syrup. Stir in the bicarbonate of soda and add the oats and flour. Mix well. Make walnut size balls of the mixture and place them well apart on a well-greased baking tin. Press down the top of each ball with a fork. Bake in a moderate oven at 350F/180C for 11 to 15 minutes. Let them cool then place on a wire tray.

Oatcakes

115g of oatmeal
¼ teaspoon of salt
Pinch of baking soda
1 dessert spoon of melted butter
Boiling water to mix

Heat a non-stick frying pan. Mix the oatmeal, salt and baking soda in a bowl and work into a soft dough with the melted butter and sufficient boiling water. Form into a ball and roll out into a ¼ inch round using some oatmeal for dusting. Cut into rounds and place each on the frying pan and cook until the edges begin to curl then toast the other side under a grill until brown.

Skirlie

60g dripping in a frying pan
Two medium sized onions, roughly chopped
Half teaspoon of salt
115g of medium grain oatmeal
Salt and pepper to taste

Melt the fat in a frying pan. Brown the onions. Add the oatmeal to absorb the melted fat and cook for around five minutes, stirring continuously. Serve while hot with chappit tatties and mashed neeps. Skirlie goes very well with chicken and also with fried bacon, eggs and sausages.

Cranachan

60g of pin head oats
300 ml of double cream
3 tablespoons of caster sugar
2 tablespoons of Drambuie (or sherry)
225g of raspberries

Preheat the oven to 400F (200C). Toast the oatmeal gently, shaking the baking tin occasionally, until gold brown. Whisk the cream in a chilled bowl until it begins to thicken and then fold in the caster sugar. Beat until the mix is firm enough to form peaks. Lightly blend in the liqueur, a tablespoon at a time. Gently add in the toasted oatmeal. Divide into four parfait glasses and top with raspberries or some other soft fruit.

Ither oat dishes tae tickle yer palate

There are many more dishes and drinks that use oats as the main ingredient:

Haggis is oatmeal and suet mixed with sheep's or calf's offal (heart, lungs and liver) seasoned with onions, salt and pepper and traditionally cooked in the animal's stomach. White pudding is oatmeal and suet, seasoned with onions, salt and pepper and enclosed in skin after the fashion of sausages.

Black pudding is the same mix of oatmeal, suet, onions, salt and pepper but with pig or bull's blood added.

Fish such as herring, cod or haddock cooked in a coating of oatmeal is always a favourite. And purry is a savoury dish of oatmeal brose with kail while tartan purry adds chopped red cabbage to the mix.

There are several drinks that use oatmeal. Athole Brose is a drink using a mix of oatmeal brose, honey, whisky, and sometimes cream. Blenshaw (from the French 'blanche eau', meaning white water) is a refreshing drink comprising oatmeal, nutmeg, sugar, milk and water. Stoorum is oatmeal, milk and water. Caudle is stoorum with the addition of a beaten egg yolk. Forrach is oatmeal stirred into buttermilk, whey or whipped cream. Pap-in is a drink made of light ale and oatmeal.