

## Chinese Shortcakes

These biscuits are typically served with jasmine tea at the end of a Chinese banquet and, while lotus seed paste is traditional, they can be filled with red bean, sesame or any of the sweet Asian pastes. Traditionally they're made with lard, but I prefer butter for its convenience and flavour. Bring both the butter and egg to room temperature before making the dough, and don't overwork it once the dry ingredients are added, treat it like a scone dough and just bring it together without kneading. Custard powder was introduced to Chinese cooking via Hong Kong and adds a lovely vanilla note and golden colour to these biscuits; if you don't have any, add a tablespoon more flour. This recipe is a variation on one from Cheong Liew's wonderful book *My Food*, and he suggests serving Tieguanyin (TGY) oolong tea with it.

Makes 6 pieces



### INGREDIENTS

- 100g butter
- 80g castor sugar
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 160g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- 1 tablespoon custard powder (optional)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon bi-carb soda
- 150g lotus seed paste

### METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 190°C.
2. Place butter and sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer and beat until pale and fluffy.
3. Add half the egg, reserving the rest for glazing. Beat to incorporate the egg well.
4. Sift in combined flour, custard powder (if using), baking powder and bicarb soda and fold it in to form a rough dough.
5. Turn onto a clean, dry work surface and use your hands to bring it together into a soft dough, mixing as little as possible. If it's too soft to handle, wrap in baking paper and refrigerate for 30 minutes or so.
6. Divide dough into 6 equal pieces, dusting your hands with flour if necessary.
7. Divide lotus seed paste into 6 equal pieces and press them between the palms of your hands to form discs about 4cm wide, dusting with a little flour if necessary. Set aside.
8. One by one, roll a piece of dough into a ball and flatten it in the palm of your hand to form a disc about 8cm wide.
9. Place a piece of paste in the centre and fold the edges of the dough around it to enclose it.
10. Press gently between your palms to flatten it into a disc about 3cm high.
11. Place on a large baking paper-lined baking tray and repeat with remaining dough and paste, ensuring they're spaced well apart as they'll spread when they cook.
12. Decorate the tops if you like, then bake for about 20 minutes, until lightly golden.
13. Remove from oven, brush well with some of the remaining egg and return to the oven for about 5 minutes, until shiny and deep golden.
14. Serve warm or at room temperature.