



Manx Fruit Bonnag

If the Isle of Man can lay claim to a 'best known dish', it would be bonnag. The name probably comes from the same root as Scots bannock and I believe it would originally have been a simple soda bread or griddle cake made with barley or oats, though today an oven-baked cake made from wheaten flour is more common. My recipe is inspired by one I found on the Isle of Man website and is a perfect sweet treat with a cup of tea. Cooking is all about taking inspiration from what's around you and making recipes and dishes your own, and the trick of soaking the currants in strong tea is one I learned from making Welsh bara brith. So, while it may not be traditional for bonnag, it is Celtic and I hope the Manx don't mind.

Makes 10 slices

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tea bag
- ½ cup boiling water
- 1 cup currants (150g)
- 1 cup castor sugar
- 2½ cups plain flour (375g)
- 1 teaspoon bicarb soda
- 50g cold butter, diced, plus extra for greasing and serving
- 1½ teaspoons mixed spice
- 1 cup buttermilk



METHOD

1. Place teabag in a mug and pour the boiling water over it; set aside to steep for 5 minutes.
2. Place currants and sugar in a bowl.
3. Pour the hot tea over them, stir to dissolve the sugar and press the currants down to submerge them as much as possible. Cover and set aside for an hour or 2, ideally overnight.
4. Preheat the oven to 180°C.
5. Grease a loaf tin (about 22 x 11cm) and line the base with baking paper.
6. Place flour and bicarb soda in a mixing bowl and use your fingertips to rub in the butter until it disappears.
7. Add mixed spice, currant mixture and buttermilk and mix to combine well.
8. Pour into the loaf tin and level the top.
9. Bake for about 30 minutes, until well coloured, then cover the tin with aluminium foil and continue baking for a further 30 minutes or so, until a wooden skewer comes out with just a little crumb clinging to it.
10. Set aside in the tin to cool a little then turn out onto a wire rack.
11. Slice and serve with butter.