

**Baking with Jam:
Jam Squares & Scones**
by: **Kit Heathcock**

Jam-making is over for the year, the summer heat has finished off the strawberries, the apricot season went by in the blink of an eye, it's too hot to think of cooking anything at all until evening cools the air. Even the memory of standing over a simmering pot of jam makes me perspire.

The dog days of summer have us heading for the beach or pool, sandwiches for lunch, the swiftest of stir-fries or pasta dishes for supper, so I can get quickly out of the kitchen again to eat outside. Baking has been reduced to a minimum, bought biscuits replace home-made, the bread is baked in the evening so as not to heat up the house unnecessarily in the sweltering daytime. The jam, fruit of my spring labour, stays on the shelf in the larder, half used pots hide in the fridge, the pots of apricot jam that I burnt (yes it happened again, when I turned my back for five minutes, so much for learning from experience) wait for me to get baking again to be used up.

Eventually school starts after the long holidays and I am forced back to the kitchen stove to bake once more, for my son's class cake sale. The weather is still hot so the attraction of spending part of the afternoon getting even hotter next to the hot oven is zero, but in order to qualify for even the starting rounds of the Supermum stakes I have to get that apron on and sweat!

At last though an opportunity to clear out those perfectly good but unfinished pots of jam, slightly solidifying, that no-one can be bothered to excavate, when the larder is still full of enticing new pots. I'll make jam squares, even the slightly caramelised apricot jam works well with these and you can do stripes of different jams, if more than one kind need finishing. Jam squares are even worth opening a new perfect pot of jam for, they don't last long in this family, in fact I'm likely to be in trouble if I send the whole batch off to the cake sale and don't keep any back for home consumption!

So the recipe:

Jam Squares

- 250 g soft butter
- 250 ml sugar
- 2 eggs
- 5 ml vanilla essence
- 15 ml baking powder
- a pinch salt
- 1 pot jam

Cream the butter and sugar well. Beat the eggs with the vanilla, add to the butter and sugar and mix well. Sift the flour, baking powder and salt together and add to the mixture one cup at a time until it forms a soft dough. You may have to knead with your hands at the end. Set aside one third of the dough and press and pat the rest into a greased 37 x 25 cm baking tray till even. Spread generously with jam. Use the coarse side of the grater to grate the remaining dough over the top – leave it loose and spread with a fork to cover any gaps. (If you run the grater under cold water now and then it should stop the dough from sticking). Bake at 180 degrees C for 30-35 minutes until golden brown. Don't let it get dark brown as it will be too dry. Cut into squares and leave to cool in tin. You can sift some icing sugar over the top if you like, but I tend not to as it makes it too sweet for me.

Well, I survived the baking session, temper just about intact, sweat flowing from my brow and made for the pool afterwards to recover my cool, hoping for autumn to arrive before the next cake sale does. This led to thinking about quick baking things to do in summer – a kitchen smash and grab raid.

Scones have to be one of the quickest things to make and bake – 5 minutes of mixing, 10 minutes to bake and served immediately with two types of home-made jam, excellent for impressing visitors and family or just having something to give unexpected arrivals for tea, when the cupboard is bare. They are also one of the best ways of presenting really nice home-made jam simply, so that it can be tasted and appreciated. If you take them out to a shady spot in the garden to eat, then it doesn't matter that the kitchen is now hot, steamy and floury and so are you! Get all the rest of the tea things ready before you start, so that you can evacuate the kitchen as soon as they are done.

Scones

- 2 cups self-raising flour
- half a teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 dessertspoons sugar
- 1 egg
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup milk

Sift together the flour, salt and sugar. Rub in the butter. Add the beaten egg and milk to make a light, moist dough (it can be very sticky, just use plenty of flour for rolling and cutting). Roll out to about 2 cm thickness and use a medium sized cutter to cut out rounds (avoid twisting as you press or the scones will be uneven). I vary the size of cutter, I find people prefer to eat a few small scones rather than one huge, intimidating one. Brush with a little milk or beaten egg. Bake at 200 degrees C for 10-12 minutes. Cool on a rack but eat while very fresh, even straight away. If you don't have rolling-pins and cutters use a smooth bottle to roll and a glass to cut.

These are also good for winter, the heated up kitchen will then seem warm and cosy and the baking smell enticing and hospitable. The jam will bring reminiscences of sunshine and summer fruits and you can be nostalgic about summer days when it is too hot to bake.

About The Author

Kit Heathcock: Sometime flower photographer, keen observer of the resonances of life and fulltime mother. Born in the UK but now living on a farm in the southern hemisphere. Contributor to the creation and maintenance of <http://www.aflowergallery.com> one of the homes of chakra flower art.

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