



ANNIE EVANS
THE DIG COOK



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RECIPES FOR ARCHAEOLOGISTS

Feeding a hungry team at an archaeological dig or survey takes much more than main courses and salads. If the work is hard, and it almost always is, people can build up big appetites by the time the food is on the table. Dips and starters help to fill them up and a good, hearty main course really settles them down.

This sort of cooking requires versatility: you need to be able to turn your hand to just about anything. The limitations imposed by very basic kitchen equipment (which is the usual situation) and the unavailability of some important ingredients (also not unusual) can pose major problems for the cook.

The result is that compromises may have to be made. Can't get that special ingredient? If there's a substitute the problem goes away. If not, make something else. Fast decision-making is vital: with 40 or more people arriving for lunch or dinner in just a couple of hours there's no time for messing about.

There are other issues to consider in menu planning. For a start, consider the mix of people at the average site: students, academics, specialists of various kinds, visiting VIPs and perhaps some occasional guests from the nearest village.

The cook is dealing with a considerable variety of tastes and nutritional requirements: vegetarians, carnivores, people who love salad, people who hate salad, people who won't eat fish, the lactose-intolerant, those with cultural culinary preferences and the just plain picky.

He or she has to aim to please the majority of those who come to the table. Yes, the vegetarians and lactose-intolerant will be provided for but the people who would like the stones removed from the olives in the salad just have to cope with the fact that they are not at a five-star restaurant.

The fieldwork cook has very limited time, help and resources. This is cooking for the middle ground and cooking in a hurry. The skill of the cook should be able to conceal the fact that a lot of shortcuts have to be taken in this kind of work. Deal with the differing tastes by providing a choice of dishes.

While the customers will certainly have varying opinions about the main course, there is usually agreement about dessert. And here it's important to provide variety – not in the same meal but night after night. It doesn't have to be fussy or ambitious but dessert should definitely target the sweet tooth.

Local seasonal fruit, whether peaches, plums or melons, always provides a good basis for dessert. Fruit salad and icecream is a simple but delicious dessert and may solve a problem for the cook who's running short of time.



When there's time for something more ambitious a good cake is hard to beat. This depends, of course, on whether at least one large cake tin is available and whether the kitchen equipment includes an oven. Assuming these two vital items are on hand the following cake is perfect for the places in which I often work.

The recipe came to me from Skevi Loizidou, a Greek friend with whom I worked in Cyprus a few years ago. I've cooked this cake many times and it's always a hit.

The beauty of it is that not only is it delicious but it's quick and easy to make because there is no laborious creaming of butter and sugar. The addition of the citrus syrup poured generously over the hot cake transforms it into a delicious dessert.

Annie Evans

THE DIG COOK'S WEBSITE
<http://www.digcook.com>

CITRUS SYRUP CAKE

Quantities are to serve 30

THE CAKE

- 2 cups corn oil (or sunflower oil)
- 2 cups orange juice
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- 3 teaspoons vanilla
- 3 teaspoons cinnamon
- 2 cups plain flour
- 6 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 cups plain flour



METHOD

Line the bottom of a 30cm round cake tin with a circle of baking paper. Grease the sides of the tin. Preheat oven to 180 degrees centigrade or 350 degrees Fahrenheit.

Place the oil, orange juice, sugar, eggs and vanilla into a large mixing bowl and whisk for five-ten minutes until the sugar dissolves. Sieve flour, cinnamon, baking powder and add to the above mixture. Mix thoroughly with whisk until well combined, forming a batter. Pour the batter into the prepared cake tin and bake in a moderate oven for forty minutes.

Test the cake in the centre with a skewer or toothpick. If it comes out clean the cake is ready. If not, give it another five-ten minutes in the oven and test again. When it passes the skewer test it's ready to take out of the oven. Prick it all over the top with the skewer to allow the syrup to soak in.

THE SYRUP

- 2 cups orange juice
- 3/4 cup sugar
- Cream, plain yogurt or icecream to serve

METHOD

Place the syrup ingredients in a saucepan. Bring to the boil and simmer for five-ten minutes until the mixture thickens to a syrupy state. Pour hot syrup over the cake and set aside to allow the cake to cool and the syrup to be absorbed.

This cake makes a delicious dessert when served with whipped cream, a mixture of yogurt and cream, plain yogurt or icecream.