

## Workshop 2: Scones with Alex!



### Scone Basics

Scones may at first seem identical to their muffin cousins. Both are eggy quick breads that rely on the rising action of baking soda or powder with similar ratios of one part wet to two parts dry ingredients with scones leaning towards drier and muffins towards wetter batters. That being said, any scone connoisseur will be quick to point out that a scone is certainly not a muffin and that a muffin only approximates a scone when striving to be something beyond itself. A scone is never cakey as with some muffins and should certainly edge towards the savoury side of life. Subtle flavours to complement delectable spreads or a pat of butter are the end goal.

As a scone is not a scone without butter, vegan options will not be discussed. The liquid fat from cream produces a lovely mouth feel. If only whole milk or, heaven forbid, skim milk is available, bolster the fat content with three quarters of a tablespoon of flavourless oil (such as canola or corn) per one third cup of milk. The cutting in of the chilled butter to the dry ingredients is paramount to actualizing the crisp exterior and flaky interior that defines the scone. Aside from arterial congestion the increased fat content in a scone allows a longer shelf life than its muffin cousin. But like all quick breads, scones are best fresh out of the oven and when required can be revived with a split through the centre and a trip to the toaster.

As a cakey product is not the goal, the sugar always will go in the dry ingredients along with the butter. Fruit additions should be soaked in the egg and cream mixture for no less than ten minutes to allow for a smooth fruit flavour throughout. Be aware that the use of a very juicy fruit will require additional flour. Raisins and other dried fruit should be soaked in water first for twenty minutes (the longer the better) to plump, then drained and added to the wet.

The health conscious may be tempted to replace white flour with a more nutritious grain product but do so at your own peril. Much of what makes a scone great is tied to the properties of white flour. It is recommended that white flour make up at least one half of the dry ingredients. Other grain products may be used but think of them as additions rather than replacements to the white flour.

To mix the wet and dry ingredients create a well or bowl in the dry ingredients and pour in the wet. Then, with a wide wooden spoon, fold the dry perimeter into the wet. Mix gently until the spoon seems a futile proposition then switch to bare hands and knead the dough in the same technique one would use for bread but without the peasant furor. As with muffins the development of gluten is to be shunned so one must mix as minimally as possible and gently.

Scones rely on the CO<sub>2</sub> produced by baking powder for their wonderful rise. One should not store scone batter for any longer than necessary so as not to miss the first action of double action baking powder. To prepare the batter in advance keep the wet and dry ingredients in two separate containers and mix just prior to baking.

Traditionally scone batter is rolled out and cut into geometric triangles. It is suggested to forgo the tedious process altogether and simply drop equal sized handfuls of batter onto the pan with ample to space between to rise. An over crowded tray at worst will lead to a scone sheet and at best prevent the sides of the scone from crisping leaving the consumer to wonder what happened to three quarters of the best part of their treat. If one desires a crispier crust the oven can be steamed by splashing in a cup of water. To take this a step further, preheat the oven fifty degrees warmer than the recommended baking temperature, put the scones in with a splash of water for steam and then immediately reduce the temperature to the recommended level. With this method one must keep careful watch to ensure the product is not over baked.

A scone is finished when the tops and sides are crisped golden and a tooth pick comes out clean. Scones are rarely acceptable underdone and may be the only baked good where it is safer to err on more time in the oven rather than less. For the full experience pair the scone with an appropriate spread such as butter, jam or honey and enjoy with a warm beverage and friends.

### Recipe

#### Dry Ingredients

- ❖ 1 3/4 cups Flour
- ❖ 2 1/4 tsp Baking Powder
- ❖ 1 Tbsp to 1/4 cup Sugar
- ❖ 1 Tbsp or Less per Spice
- ❖ 1/4 cup Butter

#### Wet Ingredients

- ❖ 2 Large Eggs
- ❖ 1/3 cups Cream

#### Additions

- ✓ The following flour substitutions should not displace more than half the flour in the recipe.
  - ✓ Example: a cup of oats is added so a third of a cup of flour is subtracted from the recipe.  
1 cup Oats = 1/3 cups Flour  
1 cup Bran = 1/2 cup Flour  
1 cup Whole Wheat Flour = 3/4 cup Flour
  - ✓ One should generally not exceed the following amounts of each item in a recipe.  
< 1/2 lb Nuts  
< 1/2 lb Seeds  
< 3/4 cup Dried fruit  
< 1 cup fruit
- 1) Form a bowl out of dry ingredients.
  - 2) Pour wet into dry.
  - 3) Mix minimally and gently.
  - 4) Place well spaced on a lined or greased baking sheet.
  - 5) Bake at 450 F for 14 - 17 minutes.
  - 6) Rotate half way through the baking time.