



Second World War Ration Cake

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Butter, sugar, meat, coffee, tea... This might just seem like the start of a normal grocery list to us – a few staple food items, generally accessible and relatively affordable – but it wasn't always so! In fact, during the Second World War, it would have been just the opposite.

By the early 1940s, Canadians' access to food was beginning to change. Many farmers and other workers had joined the war effort, and as a nation, it became a priority to make regular shipments of food to soldiers. In order to ensure a fair distribution of the food that was available, the Canadian government implemented rationing coupons for various products.

During this same time, life was busy at the [Fort Rodd Hill](#), as it was the first time that Canada's West Coast was under threat. Many soldiers and members of the Canadian Women's Army Corps were stationed at Fort Rodd and other forts in the Victoria-Esquimalt Coastal Defense system. Families in the area were all feeling the absence of loved ones, but they were also feeling the constraints in the kitchen. Canadian homemakers had to be innovative to find ways of making comforting treats without the ingredients upon which they normally relied.

This recipe for a ration cake – which is reflective of other war time recipes – is a great example of a treat that would have been made for special occasions. It would have taken several weeks' worth of sugar rations to make happen, and if you take a closer look, maybe you can spot the clever way of using non-rationed ingredients to make the cake rise!

Although a rationed treat of old, this cake is still good for any occasion, and perfect to try out with some little bakers at home!



Ingredients

- 1 ½ cup flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. salt
- 4 Tbsp white vinegar
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup water
- ¼ cup cocoa
- Shortening

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 °F.
2. Lightly grease an 8-inch (20cm) square pan with shortening.
3. Combine flour, sugar, baking soda, cocoa, and salt in a bowl.
4. Add the vinegar, vegetable oil, vanilla extract, and water to the mixture. Mix well.
5. Pour the mixture into the pan and bake for 30 minutes.

Makes approximately 12 portions or cupcakes.

This activity is part of Club Parka, a Parks Canada program for preschoolers offered at national parks and historic sites across the country. Kids can take part in the program online too. Visit parkscanada.gc.ca/Parka to get to know Parka, the busy little beaver who helps kids explore the world around them.

For more Parka fun, try her other activities, download her mobile app or sing along to her song! And don't forget to watch her videos! For more heritage inspired recipes, visit the Parks Canada Heritage Gourmet page at pc.gc.ca/en/culture/gourmand-gourmet.

