

Podcast 125 – Lockdown Activities – Baking Scones

Learn English while learning about daily life in Australia,
with Rob McCormack

Podcast Number 125 – Lockdown Activities – Baking Scones

<https://traffic.libsyn.com/secure/slowenglish/podcast125.mp3>

(This podcast is 11 minutes and 28 seconds long)

Hi,

Melbourne spent 112 days in lockdown for our second wave of coronavirus in 2020. As I outlined in Podcast 123 (<https://slowenglish.info/podcast-123-surviving-the-coronaviruses-second-lockdown-in-melbourne/>), it was a very strict lockdown. Apart from some daily outside exercise time and for grocery shopping or medical purposes, it meant staying at home. One of the new things I did was some baking. Unexpectedly, I have found it to be rather enjoyable. In this podcast, I would like to tell you about my baking activities and share with you the recipe for cream scones.



A sample of Rob's cream scones.

Firstly, I should explain that I am not a very good cook. However, my wife continued to work long after I retired so I took on the role of being the cook for us both. As my cooking skills are not well developed, I must say she was very patient

and considerate towards my efforts at cooking. Notwithstanding my under-developed cooking skills, during the lockdown I decided one day to try cooking some scones. In America, these would probably be called biscuits, but in Australia, New Zealand and Britain, we call them scones. Scones are sort of halfway between a small cake and a small bread roll. In their simplest form, scones are made from self-raising flour, some salt or sugar for flavour, some butter or cream and finally milk or water (or both). Different types of scones can be made by adding further ingredients such as dates, sultanas, pumpkin or bananas. Actually, the sky is the limit for any creative cook, as you can add almost anything into scones. Unfortunately, I am not one of those creative cooks, so I followed strictly a recipe I found in a cook book which I have had for around 40 years.

This recipe is called cream scones. The ingredients are:

- 2 cups (340 grams) of self-raising flour
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons (45 grams) of sugar
- half a cup (120ml) of cream and
- half a cup (120ml) of milk.

Firstly, I prepare by getting all the ingredients out on the kitchen bench, along with all the bowls and utensils I will need. I like to do this so that I don't have to go and look for something once I start preparing the scones. I find I can get distracted by having to look for something like a pot and as a result I can get the recipe wrong, for example leaving out something. I told you I was not a great cook.

Okay, so as well as the ingredients, I need:

- a mixing bowl to mix the ingredients in
- a fork to mix the ingredients in the bowl
- my measuring cups – the 1 cup measure and the 1/2 a cup measure

- a measure for 1 tablespoon (for the sugar)
- a sieve for sifting the flour
- a spoon for putting the flour into the 1 cup measure
- a cutting board for kneading the flour mixture
- a little extra flour for putting on the cutting board
- a baking tray for putting the scone mixture on
- baking paper, for covering the tray before I put the scone mixture on the tray (which stops the scones from sticking to the tray)
- a small drinking glass, used upside down to cut out each scone
- a little extra milk and
- a pastry brush, for spreading a small amount of milk onto each of the scones.

Okay, having assembled all my ingredients and utensils to make the scones, here are the steps to make the scones. Of course, before you start, make sure you wash your hands with soap and water.

1. Preheat the oven to 220 degrees Centigrade (fan-forced).
2. Break the egg into the mixing bowl.
3. Add 2 tablespoons of sugar.
4. With the fork, mix the egg and sugar together and beat them until creamy.
5. Add half a cup of cream to the bowl.
6. Add half a cup of milk to the bowl.
7. Beat the mixture with the fork until fully mixed.
8. Now add the flour, making sure you sift the flour through the sieve as you add it to the mixture.
9. Mix with the fork until it is a smooth dough.
10. Cover the cutting board lightly with a little extra flour.
11. Tip out the mixture onto the floured board and knead lightly with your bare hands. This involves folding the mixture over several times.
12. Pat the dough mixture into a circle which is about 3cm

thick.

13. Use the glass (upside down) to press down and cut out each scone from the dough, placing each on the baking paper.
14. Use the pastry brush to brush a little milk across the top of each scone. This helps them to brown slightly while cooking.
15. Bake in the oven for 13 minutes.

Remove from the oven and enjoy a scone or two while they are warm. I find they also store well in the fridge. My wife and I enjoyed them every day during lockdown as a morning tea or afternoon tea snack with a nice cup of hot tea. I like them with a small spread of butter, whereas my wife prefers them just as is.

It's quite common to find scones at your local café or bakery in Australia. At eat-in cafés you will often be able to order a Devonshire Tea, which is fresh scones spread with jam and cream, and a pot of tea or coffee. Devonshire Tea originates from England where it is still a traditional café delight. Of course many English migrants have come to Australia over the years so it is no wonder that scones have also become common and popular here in Australia.

I can remember my mother making scones at home when I was a child. Now, whenever I cook and enjoy a scone with a cup of tea, I also think of our time in lockdown during the pandemic.



Rob and some of his scones. He is wearing his new apron, a Christmas present from his wife.

If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it

in the comments box at the bottom of this page. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would love to hear from you. Tell me where you live, a little bit about yourself and what you think of my Slow English podcast. I will write back to you, in English of course. If you would like to take a short quiz to see if you have understood this podcast, you will also find it on my website. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Podcast 125 Quiz - Did you understand the podcast?

You can take the quiz as many times as you like.

Start quiz

Vocabulary

activities = things to do

assembled = put together

baking = (here) the process of cooking food using an oven

bare hands = hands with no gloves

beat = (here) to mix ingredients together quickly, usually with a fork or spoon

bench = like a table, but longer

biscuits = in Australia, small round sweets made from flour and other ingredients

board = a flat surface which you can cut vegetables and other

food on

bowls = a round hollow object you can put things in, usually food

brown slightly = to make it go a little brown in colour while it is cooking

considerate = when you are nice to other people

covering = when you put something over something else

creamy = like cream

creative = when you think of new things that are different

decided = when something is chosen

distracted = when you think of something else and forget what you were doing

dough = the mixture of flour and other ingredients, before you cook it

efforts = (here) your attempts to do something

extra = additional, a bit more

fan-forced = a certain type of oven which has a fan to make the heat hotter

floured board = a cutting board which has had some flour spread over it

folding = (here) to turn the dough over on itself with your hands, in order to make it mix

form = (here) type, sort

grocery = all types of food that you buy at the supermarket

ingredients = the things that you use to make a meal or cooked

food

kneading = to gently push, fold and push a soft dough

measure = a utensil for measuring how much of something there is

measuring = checking how much you have of something

medical purposes = for the reason of your health

mesh = a material made from thin metal wire which you can see through

migrants = people who go to live in another country, never to return

mixture = when several things are put together and mixed

notwithstanding = despite, even though

originates = started from, came from

pastry brush = a small brush used to spread liquid or paste over food to be cooked

patient = (here) to wait for something without getting angry or unpleasant

pot = a round metal or clay object to hold food and liquid when cooking

prefers = likes

retired = your career has finished and now you don't work anymore

role = a job or a task

roll = (here) a small bread

self-raising = plain flour which has a small amount of baking

soda added

share = to give another person something of yours, to let them use it

sieve = a utensil made of wire mesh so that you can remove large pieces from, say, flour

sifting = to pour a powder (such as flour) through a sieve to remove any large pieces

skills = the things you are good at doing

snack = when you eat something between meals

spread = (here) to put something over something else, to cover

store = (here) to keep something for later. For example in a fridge

strict = when something must be followed or done a certain way

tablespoons = (here) a measure equal to the amount of something held in a large spoon

the sky is the limit = an expression which means there are many, many options

tip out = to move something from one container or pot to another

tray = a flat piece of metal used to carry food

unexpectedly = when something is not expected

utensils = small tools used to help you prepare food. For example, knives, measures, etc

whereas = by contrast, when something is different