Menus, Recipes, and Assorted Snacking Suggestions, as Inspired by Children’s- and Girls’ Literature, from One Who Knows All Too Well.

by Dawn Sardella-Ayres

Children’s literature famously includes memorable scenes of food, meals, and special treats. Whether it’s Harry Potter’s butterbeer and chocolate frogs, Weetie Bat’s local Los Angeles cuisine, Pippi’s Pepparkakor, or any number of picnics, most of us have several favorite food-related kids’ book events. For girls and women in particular, food, be it the kinds or preparations, or the manners of consumption, can be the site of subversions of gendered behavior, from Sara Crewe’s clandestine attic party (pictured) to the traditional college girl dorm room “spread.” Conferences, too—especially international/multinational ones—give participants a chance to try new local foods, or share a coffee or tea and some nosh with friends, crucial social time.

An online conference experience changes some things, and, since we won’t be able to do our usual fika or group dinners in person this time, we will take advantage of the online format, instead. Furthermore, I have a wee bit of a fondness for food research, themed meals, and details, not to mention a WIP about meals in children’s lit for re-creation at home. There is no reason why my obsessions shouldn’t be put to use enhancing your own conference experience with some suggestions for possible meals or treats… especially since there is time to budget, plan, order, and/or prep, if you’re into that. Or maybe you just want to have one little easy-to-find treat to make things special. Or you can use this as your excuse to make that one dish you read about in ____. Or you might want to go in with several other friends and order a bunch of Swedish pastries, or trade recipes and baked goods. Or you want to support a local/institution, perhaps discovering something new or trying a place you’ve been meaning to, like the market that does picnic hampers, or that one bakery … and many such restaurants and shops are hurting for business and relying on shipping/delivery sales right now.

Isn’t there a meme about everyone baking bread during quarantine, anyway?

However, if you want to have Alice’s Mad Tea Party, I will plant my hands on my hips, wag a stern, reproving finger, and remind you loudly that the point of the tea party in Alice’s Adventures is that it never actually happened, so while all of the wacky cakes and bright colored biscuits and treats look fantastic, they have nothing to do with the actual events in the book, and-

Oh, heck. If you decide you want to have a Mad Tea Party, why not? We’re all mad here!

There will be room here for you to (please!) add suggestions, and we encourage you to
include things local to you, wherever you are. Food = community in Children’s Lit. Or food = sex in Children’s Lit, but we can discuss that during the conference.

NOTE: An obligatory caveat that many of my references are American, Canadian, and British, due to the nature of my primary texts. Linked recipes will include measurements from their country of origin, so you may have to do some online conversions on something before tackling it. Additionally, UK flour and US flour is different. Most of my baking-related recipes are American, and use American all-purpose flour. I will note when a recipe is from the UK, so that you can make adjustments accordingly. I have never tried adapting any of these older, traditional recipes to include vegan or gluten-free options, so please chime in on that, as well, if you have suggestions or resources.

Where to start? The simpler stuff.
It can be relatively easy to find things that add literal Children’s Lit/Girls’ Lit flavor to our conference weekend. Children’s Lit related items you might be able to find in your neighborhood market, online, or order locally include:

- Bertie Botts Every Flavour Beans, Chocolate frogs, and other *Harry Potter* goodies
- Bibimbap, a Korean mixed rice, meat, and vegetable dish (*Bee-bim Bop!*)
- Cereal: Lucky Charms and/or Raisin Bran (*Paper Towns*)
- Cake. So many possible kinds of cake. CAKE!
- Currant buns, a European raised sweet bun with currants (or raisins or sultanas)
- Dim Sum, Chinese meal of small dishes served with tea (*Dim Sum for Everyone*; Susan Tan’s *Cilla Lee-Jenkins* books)
- Doughnuts, a usually-round fried dough confection, with a hole in the middle.
- Fresh items from your local farmers’ market (in honor of all of the resilient North American girls on farms, from Cassie Logan to Anne Shirley to Laura Ingalls to Calpurnia Tate. Sorry, Wilbur)
- Jelly roll, a sponge cake spread with jam, rolled, and cut into spiral slices (*Alexander And The Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*)
- Kosher deli items from New York City (Maurice Sendak, Sidney Taylor, Ezra Jack Keats, Louise Fitzhugh, Judy Blume). Katz’s salamis are shipped worldwide, and items like U-Bet chocolate syrup for egg creams (a seltzer drink, which has neither eggs nor cream), or half-sour pickles might be available to you, too. Mmmm, there’s nothing like the real thing, as Grandma said in *Are You There, God? It’s Me, Margaret!*
○ https://shop.carnegiedeli.com/
○ https://www.goldshorseradish.com/fox-s-syrups
○ https://www.juniorscheesecake.com/

- Pancit, a Filipino noodle dish (*Cora Cooks Pancit*)
- Pepparkakor, Swedish ginger snaps, often in decorative tins
- Pie, from fresh berry pies in any number of regions, to London’s savory meat pies, to a slow-baked chicken pie for Sunday dinner in the American midwest, pie may be the most-mentioned dish in Children’s Literature
- Stew, a combination of pieces of vegetables and usually meat, slow-cooked in a gravy… as long as it is a favorite personal recipe, and you are willing to share (*Thank You, Omu! Also, Nancy Drew, specifically The Secret of Shadow Ranch*)
- Thukpa, a noodle soup from Tibet (*The Adventures of Tootsie Lama*)
- Turkish Delight, a semi-soft candy, traditionally served in cubes and dusted with powdered sugar (*Narnia* series)
- *Willie Wonka* brand candy

**Drinks**

Drinks can also be simple or a bit more complicated, as you prefer. Of course, be it conference or Girls’- and Children’s Lit, you can never go wrong with tea. A few ideas are:

- Coca-Cola (*The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*). You can even try to find one of the cane-sugar versions, for added authenticity
- Tea
- Cambric tea (Montgomery, Wilder, Wiggin, Lovelace)
- Raspberry cordial, or, if you’d rather, currant wine (*Anne of Green Gables*)
- Hot chocolate or cocoa
- Lemonade
- Pumpkin Juice (*Harry Potter*)
- Ginger beer (Enid Blyton)
Drinks Recipes

Cambric tea

Cambric tea was hot water and milk, with only a taste of tea in it, but little girls felt grown-up when their mothers let them drink cambric tea. Wilder, The Long Winter

When cocoa was dear, or unavailable, and tea too expensive and stimulating for children, cambric tea was a solution. From the Little House Cookbook, here is a recipe to make six cups. Adjust accordingly.

Black tea, 7 rounded teaspoons
Homogenize milk
Brown sugar

Fill teakettle with water and bring it to a brisk boil.
Steep tea for at least five minutes.
Heat milk on low to medium heat, do not boil.
Half-fill a teacup with warm milk, add hot water until almost full, and pour in just enough tea to color. Serve with brown sugar for sweetening.

- Raspberry cordial

I love bright red drinks, don’t you? They taste twice as good as any other color.
Montgomery, Anne of Green Gables

If you’d prefer to drink currant wine, please do so responsibly. This recipe is courtesy of the Anne of Green Gables film website. https://www.anneofgreengables.com/recipes/recipes-from-avonlea-raspberry-cordial-recipe

Ingredients
500g fresh raspberries
1/3 cup lemon juice (around 3 lemons)
12 cups boiling water
3 cups white sugar
approximately 400ml cool water

Wash raspberries and place them in a large bowl
Squeeze lemons, then pour the juice through a strainer onto the raspberries. Mix gently.
Boil 12 cups of water in a large pot
Stir sugar into boiling water until it dissolves
Pour liquid onto raspberries
Cover mixture and let steep in refrigerator for 24 hours
Take mixture from fridge and pass it through a sieve to remove the seeds
Use a potato masher to press the raspberries and extract as much of the juice as possible
Add approximately 400ml of cool water to the raspberry mush to help extract natural flavours and colours
Strain mixture until all pulp and seeds are removed

- **Betsy-Tacy’s Picnic cocoa**
  “I’ll put some cocoa in the pail.” They had a special, battered, smoke-blackened pail in which they always made cocoa on their picnics. Lovelace, *Betsy and Joe*.

Betsy, Tacy, and Tib have shared countless picnics (more on that later!), and, as the *Beyond Domestic Science: Recipes from Betsy-Tacy* cookbook notes, although the books use the terms “cocoa” and “hot chocolate” interchangeably, they are two different things. On their picnics, it is likely that the practical option of powdered cocoa was mixed in the girls’ smoke-blackened pail. This recipe makes four cups, or two very large ones.

4 teaspoons unsweetened cocoa powder
4 teaspoons sugar
Cold milk
4 cups hot milk

Mix cocoa and sugar. Stir together with a little cold milk until smooth. Stir this mixture into the hot milk, boil 2 minutes, and serve.

- **Pumpkin juice**
  ...all anybody felt like doing was strolling onto the grounds and flopping down on the grass with several pints of iced pumpkin juice. ... Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*

Can’t get to Hogwarts’, or even just Wizarding World? Copycat recipes like this help in a pinch, thanks to In Literature’s website.

Half a butternut squash, seeds removed and 2 cups water
OR 1 cup canned pumpkin and 1/4 cup water
1 1/4 cup pumpkin juice
3 cups apple juice
1/2 cup apricot nectar
1/2 tsp vanilla essence
2 tsp pumpkin pie spice
1/2 cup sugar

If making from scratch, place half a butternut squash in a baking tray lined with a layer of water. Roast for ~40 minutes at 180 C° or 355 F° until soft when fork is pressed in. Remove from oven and let cool.
In a blender, scoop in the squash (discarding the skin) and water and blend. You can also put the pumpkin through the juicer, following it with water if you want a smoother texture.
In a saucepan, measure out 1 1/4 cups of pumpkin juice and combine with apple juice, apricot nectar, vanilla essence, 2 tsp pumpkin pie spice and sugar.
Bring to a boil then reduce to a simmer for 20-30 minutes. By simmering you’ll be reducing the water so it’ll have a more concentrated taste and will help the spices infuse with the juices, which plays a big part in the taste.
Chill and serve (although served hot is wonderful too!)

Fika

Perhaps you want to tap into the conference’s location with a Swedish fika, like we would be having together in person if not for a pandemic and all. Fika is a short mid-morning or mid-afternoon break for coffee and chat. Fika often includes a bite of something-or-other, usually sweet, collectively called fikabröd. My favorite is kanelbullar, gorgeous cardamom-laced cinnamon buns. Depending on your location, it may be difficult to find Swedish brands, but, in a pinch, there is always IKEA, and I’m not joking, because they sell decent tinned ginger biscuits, and are my only source for Daim bars when I’m in the States! But luckily, I’m in Chicago at the moment, which was home to one of the largest Swedish immigrant populations in America in the late 1800s-early 1900s, and there are still several local bakeries and restaurants where I can source some fika treats of my own. What do you have near you?

You can bring a fika experience to your own home for conference weekend: Order Swedish coffee beans, chocolate, and/or prepackaged snacks online. Bake something decadent ahead of time. Find a local Swedish/Scandinavian bakery or restaurant in your area. You might try:

- Swedish coffee roasters
  - Koppi [https://www.koppi.se/international-orders](https://www.koppi.se/international-orders)
  - Love Coffee Roasters [https://lovecoffee.se/shop-coffee/](https://lovecoffee.se/shop-coffee/)
  - Norway’s Tim Wendelboe [https://timwendelboe.no/?v=7516fd43adad](https://timwendelboe.no/?v=7516fd43adad)
- Chokladboll, a chocolate confection rolled in coconut
- Prinsesstårta, or princess cake. Almost too pretty to eat
- Kladdkaka, a sticky chocolate cake
- Kanelbullar, the aforementioned cinnamon rolls
- Bärtårta, a berry tart
- Pepparkakor, like Pippi Longstocking
- Dark rye bread, or rye crispbread, with butter and blue cheese
- Salt licorice

You also might try some treats from our conference organizers and participants, like:

Malin's Swedish Pancakes:

Pour 3 deciliters [1 ¼ cups] of milk into a bowl.
Add 4 eggs. Mix together with a whisk.
Add another 3 deciliters [1 ¼ cups] of milk. Whisk together.
Add 2.5 deciliters [1 cup] of wheat flour. Whisk together.
Add 1 teaspoon of salt. Whisk together.
Heat up 1-2 tablespoons of butter. Whisk together with the rest of the ingredients. Pour around 1 deciliter [⅓ - ½ cup] of the mix into a frying pan. Flip when the mix is no longer runny. The pancakes are ready when they have a golden colour.

Eat with for example:

- Strawberry/Raspberry jam and whipped cream
- Syrup, bananas and ice cream
- Blueberry jam and ice cream
- Bacon and lingonberry jam (courtesy of my partner Ulf who has taught me this version)

NOTE: When it is time for fika, change your location. If you’ve been inside, go sit outside for a few minutes, if possible. Switch to a different chair or table. Put work stuff aside, and video chat with one or two people about some of the ideas percolating in your brains. Write in your journal. Read. Breathe. Relax.

**Dawn’s Pretentious Salon Tea Time**

Raised in a household where any detailed preparation of food was considered “silly” or “snobby” as well as “a waste of time,” my tea parties became my own kind of rebellion. If we were conference-ing in person, as originally planned, and I was in Sweden for an extended stay, it’s likely that you might have been invited over to mine for tea-and-gabblings, like we’d have at Cambridge. The foodstuffs for such gatherings might vary, from baked goods or a cheese plate to an entire Mexican food spread, but there were always a few favorites. And since I’ve been back in the States, I’ve had to learn to perfect the UK treats we’d share. I miss those all-day-into-late-night chats… usually including a rowdy game of Kidlit Cards Against Humanity at some point.

Care to join me in a virtual version?

If you can get it, the appropriate tea is Fortnum’s Jubilee blend. Queen Anne’s, second. Otherwise, ah, fine, whatever Earl Grey you have will do.

- **Cinnamon Toast Deluxe**
  (From WIP on *Entertaining with Classic Children’s Literature*, College Girl Fiction chapter)

Cut slices of bread one inch thick, remove crusts and cut bread into four strips. Dip these strips into melted butter and roll in cinnamon and sugar. Chill in refrigerator for several hours. When time for serving, put in pan in hot oven* for about 10 minutes, when they should be crusty on the outside, soft inside.

The bread should be fine grained and is better when not absolutely fresh. Otherwise it is apt to absorb too much butter. (Recipe from Emily M. Williams in *Favorite Recipes of Smith Alumnae*)
*Bake at 350° F/180° C

**Fortnum & Mason Welsh Rarebit**
(From *The Fortnum’s Cook Book*)

To make rarebit mix, combine four teaspoons of Guinness, a teaspoon of English mustard, ½ teaspoon of Worcestershire sauce, a few drops of Tabasco sauce and one egg into a bowl. Add 250g [about a cup] of grated [sharp] Cheddar cheese and mix well.

Lightly toast four slices of brown or sourdough bread and spread the rarebit mixture on top. Place under a hot grill until golden brown, then transfer to an oven heated to 180C/Gas Mark 4 [350° F/] and bake for 3 minutes.

Meanwhile, put four tomato halves under the hot grill until lightly browned. Serve each slice of rarebit sprinkled with sea salt and coarsely ground black pepper and accompanied by a tomato half.

**Copycat Dishoom’s Chocolate Chai**

300 ml (a cup) water
300 ml (a cup) milk
2 good-quality Chai tea bags [I like Organic India Tulsi Masala Chai Tea best, and, after experimenting a lot, have found that this is better even than mixing my own spices]
Chocolate syrup or, preferably, about 8 squares of quality dark chocolate. [Trader Joe's Pound Plus 72% bar is my go-to. Just don’t use chocolate chips! They are too oily.]

Simmer the water and tea bags for 10 minutes on low heat. Add milk, bring to a boil, and let boil for 10 more minutes. In a separate pan, melt down chocolate, adding enough water by the teaspoon and stirring constantly to make a sauce. Remove tea bags, and stir in chocolate sauce.

Strain into cups, adding a splorge of cream into each cup, and mix again. Serve hot.

**Ready-made and/or easy Children’s/Girls’ Lit snacks and meals**

There are plenty of simple snacks or meals to make, depending on how detailed you want to be. I mean, technically, Miss Muffet’s “curds and whey” is just… cottage cheese, you know. So you can opt for the simplicity of

- Frances’s bread and jam
- Paddington Bear’s Marmalade Sandwich and/or cinnamon toast
- Harriet M. Welsch’s tomato sandwich, cake, and milk
- Strawberries, sugar and cream. Tuffet optional (traditional *Mother Goose* rhymes)
• Apples (many girls’ lit characters, most notably Jo March, are fond of eating piles of apples whilst reading, writing, or any time they are ripe and flavorful, really)
  • George and Martha’s split pea soup… or, skip the soup and make chocolate chip cookies instead (George and Martha)
  • Spaghetti and meatballs. Or soup. Or mashed potatoes. (Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs)
  • “Rich, hot, savory soup…and sandwiches and toast and muffins” (A Little Princess)
  • Popcorn
  • Raclette, melted cheese on toasted bread (Heidi)
  • Meat pies
  • Fresh bread and butter (too many books to name), or hot buttered toast (Wind in the Willows in particular)

There are many ways to add detail and authenticity to these simple meals, too, if you want. Order British marmalade and tea and treacle, or Swiss Raclette cheese, or meat from the butcher. Bake a loaf of bread. Serve on a vintage plate or tablecloth. Pack your picnic in an actual basket, and spread a cloth on the grass or in the living room or on your office desk. Include appropriate music, either of the era of your source material, or kids’ lit-related (and obviously, I will provide options, see below).

Meals and snacks that require concerted effort

My biggest issue with cookbooks based on children’s literature is they are often impractical (Laura and Mary’s snow-candy from Little House in the Big Woods, “stone soup,” anything featuring live game), disgusting/not meant to actually be eaten (Anne Shirley’s liniment cake, Oliver Twist’s gruel, Betsy, Tacy and Tib’s Everything Pudding, the meal in The Hundred and One Dalmatians where everything tastes of pepper), or are simplified versions of recipes for children to make themselves.

I, however, want to know what those characters (and their authors) would actually be cooking, buying, eating at the time and in that place, what actual dishes might have inspired a food scene in a book. Therefore, my research has focused on historical accuracy: finding actual cookbooks in authors’ collections, or what might have been available regionally, or what was popularly circulating at the time via magazines.

Sometimes, I even get lucky, and discover the authors themselves have recipes available:

• From the Kitchen of L.M. Montgomery

• La Bonne Table by Ludwig Bemelmans
Roal Dahl’s Revolting Recipes

Laura Ingalls Wilder’s gingerbread

Treats
Perhaps you just want to expend your efforts on one specific Girls’- or Children’s Lit treat to have on hand? Here are a few selections:

Louisa May Alcott’s Apple Slump

The Little Colonel’s corn muffins

Mother Wilder’s pound cake from Farmer Boy

Old-fashioned pound cake recipes are easy to remember: it’s called a pound cake because it requires a pound each of butter, sugar, flour, and eggs. This rich recipe from the Little House Cookbook makes a 4- to 5-pound cake, but you may want to halve or even quarter the recipe and bake it in a smaller mini-loaf pan. (This is one of the regular cakes I make for tea time if I’m in a baking mood, along with Laura’s gingerbread.)

Unsalted butter, 1 pound (2 cups)
Granulated sugar, 1 pound (2 cups)
Eggs, 1 pound (8 medium)
Salt, a generous pinch
Ground nutmeg, ½ teaspoon
Ground mace, ½ teaspoons
White flour, 1 pound (4 cups) sifted unbleached all purpose

At least an hour before starting, set out all refrigerated ingredients to warm to room temperature.
In a large bowl cream butter with wooden spoon until fluffy. Gradually work in the sugar by pressing with spoon against bowl side, and blend until mixture is no longer grainy. This is hard work; it will help to work standing with the bowl at arm’s length on a low table, or sitting with the bowl in your lap.

Break an egg into a saucer. Unless it is bad, put it in a 2-quart bowl (this old-fashioned two-step method keeps a bad egg from polluting the others). Repeat to total one pound (8 medium) eggs. Add a generous pinch of salt. Beat eggs with a fork until light-colored and foamy, about five minutes. (A modern mixer, of course, takes less time.) Add 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg and 1/2 teaspoon mace to eggs.

Stir eggs gradually into sugar-butter mixture. Sift 1 pound (4 cups) white flour and beat in gradually, stirring only long enough to blend all ingredients. The finished batter will be quite stiff.

Smooth the batter into an ungreased 9 1/2 inch by 4 1/4 inch tube pan. Bake in a preheated 350 F° [180° C] oven for 30 minutes, then reduce heat to 325° F [160° C] and continue to bake another 30 minutes. When a new broomstraw or toothpick poked in the center comes out dry and the cake edges pull away from the pan, remove pan from oven and cool. Turn cake out and serve unfrosted.

- Maurice Sendak’s “morning cake” from *In the Night Kitchen*

This has been one of the more complicated and interesting food items to research, taking me into online archives of New York Polish Jewish household recipes of the 1920s and 30s, the same time and place young Sendak was growing up. His mother Sadie’s recipe for “morning cake” was supposedly included in his notes for *In the Night Kitchen…* but try though I might, I haven’t been able to find any information without actual archival access.

Morning cake, often served in Jewish households for Shabbos, or the Sabbath, apparently can be any kind of cake, and I’ve seen “morning cake” recipes for cheesecake, chocolate cake, pound cake, oatmeal bars, carrot cake, cinnamon buns or spice cake. Mostly, morning cake seems to be variations of American coffee cake. (Unlike in the UK, in America, coffee cake is *not* made with coffee for a coffee flavor, but rather, as a cake to accompany coffee. It is most often a soft yellow cake with a buttery streusel topping.)

The key factor for morning cake is whether or not the cake is pareve (neutral, can be combined with dairy or meat) or milchig (dairy, cannot be combined with a meat meal) according to Jewish dietary laws. We know from the book that Mickey’s morning cake has milk in it. One of these recipes might fit the bill with a hot cup of coffee or tea, and a lively discussion of gender. Cock-a-doodle-do!

- **Cinnamon Morning Cake**
- **Morning Cake**
Picnics

Picnics in Children’s Literature can be clandestine or creepy, comforting or chaotic. I’ve stuck to the more bucolic of the bunch for your Girls’ Lit conference meal possibilities. Choose your favorite, or mix-and-match!

- *The Secret Garden* (Frances Hodgson Burnett)

You can trifle with your breakfast and seem to disdain your dinner if you are full to the brim with roasted eggs and potatoes and richly frothed new milk and oatcakes and buns and heather honey and clotted cream.

**Menu**
- Roasted eggs and potatoes
- Currant buns
- Meat pies
- Parkin
- Oatcakes
- Jam, clotted cream
- Farm fresh butter
- Heather honey

Also: [Yorkshire Recipes](#)

**Roasted potatoes and eggs**

It is worth it to source farm-fresh ingredients for this dish.

4 eggs  
4 medium new potatoes, scrubbed  
4 pats of butter

Build a small campfire or light a charcoal grill. When the wood/coal has burned down to ash and embers, bury the potatoes and eggs in the hot ash. (Mary, Dickon, and Colin would have put them directly into the fire, but you can wrap the eggs and potatoes individually in foil.) One source recommends “using a needle [to] puncture a small hole at either end of the eggs. Hold them under a tap to dampen the outside” before putting them in the fire. (If you do, report back and let me know how it goes. I haven’t been able to try out this version in my Chicago apartment!) Another suggests cutting the potatoes into quarters, but I prefer them whole. Cooking time varies from 10 min to an hour; I like my potatoes more well-done, so unless they are cut up, I leave them for the whole hour. You can mix a softer roasted egg into your potato if you like, but I can’t imagine a whole lot of cutlery in a secret garden, so I roast them longer and eat them both by hand, dipped in butter and/or salt and pepper between bites, like the children might have done.
**Parkin**

Makes one tray bake
1x20cm x 5cm deep square baking dish/tray

- 120g/1 cup golden syrup
- 40g/ ⅓ cup black treacle
- 90g/ ¾ cup soft brown sugar
- 90g/ ¾ cup butter
- 120g/ 1 cup plain flour [NOTE: this is a UK specific recipe, so check adjustments for non-UK flour!]
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 120g/ 1 cup porridge oats
- 1 tbs ground ginger
- A pinch of salt
- 1 medium egg and 1 yolk
- 130ml/ ½ cup whole milk
- Half a teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

Preheat the oven to 175° C [350° F]. Brush the baking tin with a little oil and line the base with a square of baking parchment paper.

Put the syrup, treacle, sugar and butter into a pan and warm over a gentle heat, stirring until all the ingredients are mixed thoroughly.

Place all the dry ingredients (flour, oats, ginger and salt) together in a bowl and pour the treacle mixture over the top.

Beat the egg, yolk and the milk in a measuring jug and whisk in the bicarbonate of soda. Pour this into the bowl with the dry ingredients and mix everything together.

Carefully spoon into the prepared tin to 2/3 full.

Place into the preheated oven for 30-35 minutes or until risen and firm and springy to the touch.

Allow the parkin to cool before loosening from the tin, place in an airtight container and use within seven days of baking

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**Hot oatcake**

- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup water
- 1 oz. fresh yeast (or 2-1/4 tsp. active dry yeast and 1 tsp. sugar)
- 1-1/2 cups finely ground oatmeal
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 tsp. salt
2 tsp. shortening (for greasing the griddle)

In a saucepan, mix the milk and water. Set the saucepan over low heat until the mixture is lukewarm to the touch, or 110 °F if you are using a cooking thermometer.

Pour the warmed mixture into a large mixing bowl. Crumble the fresh yeast into the warm milk and water and stir it until it is dissolved. If you are using dry yeast, stir it and the sugar into the warm liquid and set it aside in a warm place for about five minutes, or until the mixture begins to thicken and bubble, before proceeding.

Stir the oatmeal, flour, and salt into the milk and yeast mixture. Add more water, if necessary, to make a batter. Cover the bowl with a damp towel or plastic wrap and set it aside in a warm place for about an hour.

Lightly grease a griddle or large skillet and place it over medium heat.

Stir the oatcake batter and spoon about 2/3 cup of it into the hot pan, spreading it slightly to make a thin oval cake in the middle of the pan.

Cook the oatcake for just a few minutes, until it is set but not browned on the bottom. Turn the oatcake and cook it briefly on the other side.

Serve the oatcake hot, letting each person break off a piece for herself. Spread the oatcake with butter and jam or marmalade, if desired. Dry any leftover loaves on a wire rack, store them covered, and eat them later, plain or with cheese.

- Baby Goes to Market (Atinuke)
  
  Market is very crowded. Mama is very busy. Baby is very curious.

Menu
Six bananas
Five oranges
Four chin chin biscuits
Three ears of roasted sweet corn
Two pieces of coconut

Using the foods Baby collects in his Mama’s basket at the Nigerian market makes for a delightful picnic menu… and, to be fair, Baby only eats one of each of these, not the whole lot! The book doesn’t specify what flavor chin chin biscuits Baby gets, just that they are “sugary.” Chin chin can also be baked or fried, although it is usually fried, and many of the recipes I’ve found include nutmeg. The kind of flour used, soy or wheat, varies as well, and often has specific regional history. Baby’s chin chin, as depicted in the picturebook, is shaped like stars, so you can use a cookie cutter to make shapes instead of cutting the dough into small squares.
Here is a video tutorial and recipe for Nigerian chin chin. This one includes prep details that are incredibly helpful. This recipe notes differences with using powdered milk.

- *What Katy Did* (Susan Coolidge)
  First came a great many ginger cakes. These were carefully laid on the grass to keep till wanted: buttered biscuit came next—three a piece, with slices of cold lamb laid in between; and last of all were a dozen hard-boiled eggs, and a layer of thick bread and butter sandwiched with corned-beef, [and] seven little pies—molasses pies, baked in saucers—each with a brown top and crisp candified edge, which tasted like toffy and lemon-peel, and all sorts of good things mixed up together... Oh, how good everything tasted in that bower, with the fresh wind rustling the poplar leaves, sunshine and sweet wood-smells about them, and birds singing overhead! No grown-up dinner party ever had half so much fun.

**Menu**
- Ginger cakes
- Buttered biscuit with sliced cold lamb
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Corned beef on thick-sliced bread with butter
- Molasses pies

**Biscuits**
“Biscuit” could often be a catch-all term in early American cookery books, but it usually refers to a specific kind of simple, unsweetened, soft quickbread, cut into rounds or squares before baking. Depending on the rising agent, they might be buttermilk biscuits, soda biscuits, baking powder biscuits, sourdough biscuits, or light biscuits. Southern biscuits generally included lard instead of butter.

In the lakeside Ohio town where *What Katy Did* was set, Aunt Izzie would have likely made a more New England-influenced version of biscuit. Old cookbooks of the time quite often have recipes that are shorter than the awe-inspiring book titles. For example, 1845’s *Modern Cookery In All Its Branches: Reduced To A System Of Easy Practice, For The Use Of Private Families: In A Series Of Receipts, Which Have Been Strictly Tested, And Are Given With The Most Minute Exactness: To Which Are Added Directions For Carving, Garnishing, And Setting Out The Table, With A Table Of Weights And Measures*, by Eliza Acton, glibly instructs: “These biscuits, which are very simple and wholesome, may be made with the same dough as good white bread, with the addition of from half to a whole ounce of butter to the pound kneaded into it after it has risen. Break the butter small, spread out the dough a little, knead it in well and equally, and leave it for about half an hour; then roll it a quarter of an inch thick; prick it well all over; cut out the biscuits; and bake them in a moderate oven from ten to fifteen minutes: they should be crisp quite through, but not deeply coloured.”
A more exact yet still historically accurate recipe is the following, sourced in one of my many, many Midwest American church cookbooks:

**Soft Biscuits**

3 cups sifted flour  
1 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp cream of tartar  
Speck of [baking] soda  
1 tsp white sugar  
1 tsp salt  
½ cup shortening  
Mix in 1 ½ cups milk + 1 beaten egg  
Mix until dough is soft, don’t overhandle.  
Bake at 425 degrees for 20 minutes

**Molasses Pie**

That amazing-sounding molasses pie -- better known to contemporary palets either with the generous addition of pecans to become pecan pie, or in some regions, with a crumb topping and called “Shoo-fly Pie” -- likely came from a good old-fashioned (even at the time Katy Carr was a girl) cookbook like *Miss Leslie's New Cookery Book*, by Eliza Leslie, published in 1857. In fact, Miss Leslie’s recipe for a Molasses Pot-Pie sounds a lot like those saucer-baked treats Aunt Izzie makes for the Carr children and friends to take to Paradise. However, Miss Leslie’s recipe is not particularly accessible to cooks today:

MOLASSES POT-PIE.— Make plenty of [pie] paste, allowing to *each quart* of flour a small half pound of finely minced suet. Line the pot three-quarters up the sides with paste, and put in a quart of West India molasses, flavored with ginger and cinnamon, lemon or orange grating, and juice. Cover it with a lid of paste, *not fitting closely* round its edges, and cut a cross slit in the top. Have ready six or eight extra pieces of suet paste, cut into squares, and boiled by themselves. When the pie is done, put these little cakes (ready boiled) into the molasses, having removed the lid or cover of the pie, and cut it up. Take out the inside paste, and cut it in pieces also. Serve up the whole in one large dish.

For those of us who don’t do a whole lot of baking with suet or even making pie crust, I found this simpler version of “Old Fashioned Molasses Pie” online, described as “a simple PA Dutch pie. Similar to a shoofly [sic] pie – but different. Chewy, sweet, unique.” With the closest approximation of ingredients, by adding a grating of lemon peel to the pie mixture, you might be able to get close to lusciousness of the Carr children’s picnic pies. You can reduce the ingredients and bake in a small, deeper patty-pan for an individual pie like each of the children had.
1 prepared 9" pie crust
3/4 cup flour, heaping
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1 1/2 tablespoon butter (butter substitute for vegans)
1/4 cup molasses (unsulphured)
1/4 cup boiling water
1/4 teaspoon baking soda

Preheat oven to 350° F [180° C]
Combine flour and sugar in a mixing bowl.
Using a pastry blender, cut in butter/butter substitute until mixture is fine crumbed.
Pour molasses in a separate mixing bowl.
In a small saucepan, bring water to a boil.
Add ¼ cup boiling water and baking soda to molasses. Stir until mixture is foamy/frothy and rises.
Pour molasses mixture into pie crust/tin. Sprinkle the flour mixture over molasses, stirring it in until just combined. Even out top of pie.
Just to prevent a mess - place pie tin on a cookie sheet - this pie can bake/spill over.
Bake for about 25 minutes. Pie will rise and then start to settle.
Cool on wire rack.

- The Tale of Peter Rabbit (Beatrix Potter)
Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail, who were good little bunnies, went down the lane to gather blackberries. But Peter, who was very naughty, ran straight away to Mr. McGregor's garden, and squeezed under the gate! First he ate some lettuces and some French beans; and then he ate some radishes; And then, feeling rather sick, he went to look for some parsley.

Menu
Blackberries
Lettuces
French beans
Radishes
Parsley

Food fresh from the garden! Most of the ingredients above would make a lovely salad, or you could try this gorgeous radish and parsley tart. Perhaps pair with Mrs. Rabbit's currant buns, or try out
Potter’s own gingerbread recipe.

- The Little White Horse (Elizabeth Goudge)

Maria opened the two bags, unfolded the snowy napkins inside, and exclaimed in delight at their contents. Marmaduke Scarlet had surpassed himself. It was amazing what he had got into a small space. Ham sandwiches. Jam sandwiches. Sausage rolls. Apple turnovers. Gingerbread. Saffron cake. Sugar biscuits. Radishes. A small crystal bottle of milk. Two little horn cups and two horn saucers. The children’s eyes sparkled, the animals licked their lips and they all set to with a will.

Menu
Ham sandwiches
Jam sandwiches
Sausage rolls
Apple turnovers
Gingerbread
Saffron cake
Sugar biscuits
Radishes
Milk

This picnic is redolent with dishes and foodstuffs from the West Country of England. You might be able to find some of these items through a Cornwall-specific market (and if you have access to farm-fresh Cornish ham, sausage, radishes, and milk, I envy you!). The apple turnovers would likely be prepared by the cook Marmaduke Scarlet same as savory Cornish pasties, half-moon shaped, pressed closed with a fork, and baked. Both the gingerbread and the sugar biscuits were probably versions of Cornish fairings, round, crunchy cookies/biscuits dating back to local fairs in the 1100s, and still sold commercially.

Saffron cake, in particular, is an instantly-recognisable Cornish cake. If you feel like tackling this labor-intensive treat, this recipe is adapted from Cornish Recipes, Ancient and Modern, by Edith Martin, published in 1929. Let me know how it turns out!

- A Girl of the Limberlost (Gene Stratton Porter)

Half the bread compartment was filled with dainty sandwiches of bread and butter sprinkled with the yolk of egg and the remainder with three large slices of the most fragrant spice cake imaginable. The meat dish contained shaved cold ham, of which she knew the quality, the salad was tomatoes and celery, and the cup held preserved pear, clear as amber. There was milk in the bottle, [and] two tissue-wrapped cucumber pickles.

Menu
Shaved cold ham
Spice cake
Bread-and-butter sandwiches with hard-boiled egg yolk
Tomato and celery salad
Pear preserves
Pickles
Elnora’s lunch box, packed for school by her cold, negligent mother, is Elnora’s first inkling that her mother might actually care about her well-being. When she smells the fragrant spice cake baking, Elnora “lifted her head and sniffed amazedly.” Mother uses one of her old cookbooks, usually kept stored away, for the recipe, and this one from Miss Parloa’s Kitchen Companion. A Guide For All Who Would Be Good Housekeepers fits the bill.

**Spice Cake**

- 1/2 cupful of butter
- 1/2 cupful of sugar
- 1/2 cupful of molasses
- 2 cupfuls of flour, scant measure
- 1/2 cupful of sour milk
- 1/2 teaspoonful of ginger
- 1/8 teaspoonful of salt
- 1 teaspoonful of cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoonful of soda
- 1/4 of a nutmeg, grated
- The juice and rind of half a lemon
- 1 egg

“Beat the butter to a cream. Gradually beat into it the sugar, then the spice and lemon, and next the molasses. Now dissolve the soda in one tablespoonful of cold water, and stir it into the sour milk. Add this and the egg, well beaten, to the other ingredients. Lastly, add the flour, and beat briskly for half a minute. Pour into a well buttered pan, and bake in a moderate oven for about fifty minutes.

This cake will keep moist for a week or ten days. If one likes fruit, half a cupful of stoned raisins and half a cupful of currants may be stirred lightly into the batter just before it is put in the pan.”

Porter doesn’t describe the composition of Elnora’s tomato-and-celery salad, but this dish from the aforementioned Modern Cookery in All Its Branches seems like a handy dish to pack in a lunchbox… or picnic basket

**Stuffed tomato salad**

- Tomatoes, medium sized
- Boiling water
- Salt
- Cucumbers (or celery)
- Mayonnaise dressing*
- Lettuce leaves
“Cover medium sized tomatoes with boiling water for a minute and remove the skin. Cut a thin slice from the top and take out part of the seeds and pulp. Sprinkle inside of the tomato with salt, invert, and let stand one half hour. Fill tomatoes with cucumbers (or celery) cut in small cubes and moistened with mayonnaise dressing. Arrange on lettuce leaves and garnish top with mayonnaise dressing.”

*Mayonnaise dressing: 1⁄2 egg yolk (1 teaspoonful) and 1⁄4 cup of olive oil is as small a quantity as is practicable to use in making the mayonnaise. This quantity made by groups of two works out well as the process of adding the oil drop by drop is difficult for a beginner working alone.

A spread!

From Malory Towers to Vassar College, those clandestine, secret late-night gatherings to feast and frolic are a literary staple. Food in Children’s Literature is often used as an erotic stand-in, and it is never more obvious than when groups of children, or groups of girls, surreptitiously share space and snacks. College novels and boarding school stories are rife with spreads, and it’s a topic I find fascinating, if I do say so myself. Even without the erotic undertones, these kinds of feasts often connote shared community, camaraderie. In Enid Blyton’s 1941 story, The Twins at St Clare’s, one of the twins’ classmates exclaims, “Golly! Pork-pie and chocolate cake, sardines and Nestlé’s milk, chocolate and peppermint creams, tinned pineapple and ginger-beer!...Talk about a feast! I bet this beats the upper third’s feast hollow! Come on – let’s begin!” Several generations before Blyton and Brazil’s English boarding school books, American “college girl” novels and series were making “a spread” a ubiquitous experience of higher education.

As I noted in the linked article, a spread was almost always informal, and required several key components: tea, a chafing dish, and a box of treats from home or in a personal dorm room horde. Almost every college girl had a chafing dish or an alcohol lamp, along with full tea tables and china; there were eventually special lamps/dishes and even cookbooks marketed to college girls living in a dorm. Girls usually kept stashes of non-perishables in their dorm rooms for these impromptu occasions, jars and bottles, packaged treats, and tins of tea. Many of the packaged snacks college girls stocked can still be found in some form in any modern market. While the formulas may have changed (or vary from country to country), items like Nabisco wafers and cookies, Triscuits, Animal Crackers, Lorna Doones, graham crackers, saltines, Mallomars, Cracker Jack, Moon Pies and Fig Newtons were all well-known grocery items in the early 1900s, shared in American college dorms. Cheese was crucial for stirring up rarebits, or “rabbits” to serve over crackers. Families sent care packages with homemade goods, such as jams, preserved meats, candies, and unfrosted loaf cakes, things that would travel well and improve in flavor after a week or more. An entire spread might be planned around the receiving of such a box of “home foods.”
Especially, college- and boarding-school girls kept unsweetened chocolate or cocoa powder for the most popular food and activity of a spread: making fudge. American-style chocolate fudge became the treat of choice at college spreads, and its careful preparation was often the central activity of a college spread. Vassar, Wellesley, and Smith each had their own version, with brown sugar and molasses, or coffee, or the quaintly named "plowed field" with small marshmallows pressed into each square before the candy is cooled fully. Letters from college girls at the time include tales of stealing butter, milk and sugar from their dorms’ dining room tables in order to facilitate fudge-making at a nighttime spread.

Put on your kimono and grab a hatpin!

Menu
Jars of olives and pickles
Nabisco wafers
Gingersnaps
Crackers, like saltines, animal crackers, or cream crackers
Welsh rarebit/“rabbit”
Mini-sausages
Tinned sardines or anchovies
Nuts
Strawberry jam for serving on crackers

- Welsh Rarebit
From *Chafing Dish Possibilities* by Fannie Merrit Farmer.

Melt one tablespoon butter, add one tea-spoon cornstarch, and stir until well mixed; then add one-half cup thin cream and cook two minutes. Add one-half pound soft, mild cheese, cut in small pieces, one-fourth teaspoon salt, one-half teaspoon mustard, and a few grains cayenne. Stir until cheese has melted, and mixture is of a creamy consistency. Pour over zephyrettes*, or slices of bread toasted on one side, rarebit being poured over untoasted side. Rarebits may be cooked directly over the flame or over the hot water pan. An unskilled person would better select the latter.

*Zephyrettes were a type of now-discontinued Nabisco cracker. Melba toast is an acceptable substitute.

- Vassar Fudge
This is the recipe that Emelyn B. Hartrige used for the Vassar College Senior Auction in 1888.
Fudge, an American invention, dates back to the 1880s. A Vassar college student in Poughkeepsie, NY, referenced it in a letter, dated 1886, saying that a classmate's cousin, who lived in Baltimore, MD, made fudge and sold it for 40 cents per pound. The author of the letter, Emelyn Battersby Hartrige obtained the recipe and made 30 pounds of it for the Vassar Senior Auction. Word about the confection spread from there to other women's colleges.

2 cups granulated white sugar
1 cup cream
2 oz. unsweetened chocolate, chopped
1 tablespoon butter + butter for pan
Wooden spoon
Saucepan
Candy thermometer

In a pot, over medium heat, combine sugar and cream, stirring constantly. Once sugar mixture is hot add chocolate. Stir constantly. Cook until mixture reaches "soft-ball" stage. (234-238 degrees) Remove from heat. Add butter. Let cool slightly, then mix until combined and fudge starts to thicken.
Transfer fudge to tin. Cut into pieces before fudge hardens.

**Betsy Ray’s German Coffee and Kuchen**

(Menu taken my WIP on *Entertaining with Classic Children’s Literature, Betsy-Tacy* chapter)

If you decide your conference experience needs the highest pinnacle of Girls’ Literature authenticity and labor-intensive preparations, why not go ahead and commit fully? This meal can be replicated quickly with store-bought goods online or from a local import- or German grocery, or more exactly with time spent in the kitchen at home.

One of Betsy Ray’s favorite things during her visit to Tib in Milwaukee, and something she repeated during her time in gemütlich Munich, was the tradition of afternoon coffee, served with kuchen, or traditional German cake. The meal was meant to be lingered over in the afternoon, either alone or with a friend, and Betsy often brought her pen and notebook with her to work on one of her many stories at the same time. And everything should be served, as Betsy remembered of Webers Coffee Shop, with “drifts of whipped cream”… nicht wahr?

**Menu:**
Kaffee
European-style hot chocolate
German kuchen
Apple cake with whipped cream
- **Coffee**
  Coffee in the Ray house for Sunday night lunches was always made with an egg, shell and all, crushed into the grounds before brewing. But German kaffee is a mild roast, taken dark (dunkel), light (hell), or mitte, mixed equal parts of coffee and milk, as Betsy preferred it.

- **European-style hot chocolate, or heiße Schokolade**
  1 1/2 cups whole milk  
  1/2 cup heavy cream  
  2 teaspoons powdered sugar  
  1/2 teaspoon espresso powder — optional, but delicious for intensifying chocolate flavor  
  8 ounces bittersweet chocolate — at least 70%, chopped*  
  Giant bowl of whipped cream — for serving  
  **Instructions**  
  In a medium saucepan over medium heat, whisk together the whole milk, heavy cream, powdered sugar, and espresso powder until small bubbles appear around the edges. Do not allow the mixture to boil.  
  Remove from saucepan from the heat and stir in the chopped chocolate until melted, returning the sauce to low heat if needed for the chocolate to melt completely. Serve warm, topped with lots of whipped cream.  
  *Choose the best quality European chocolate you can find. I find the Trader Joe's Pound Plus 72% bar (Belgian) works great. Don’t use chocolate chips!

- **Kuchen**
  (From Beyond Domestic Science: Recipes from Betsy-Tacy)
  2 cups warm milk  
  ½ cup sugar  
  ½ cup shortening  
  1 teaspoon salt  
  1 tablespoon prepared yeast  
  2 eggs  
  **Flour**  
  Mix all ingredients, using enough flour to make a soft dough. Separate dough into 8 parts. Roll out each piece to fit in a pie tin. Let rise for about 20 minutes. While dough rises, make cream filling.

  **Cream filling**  
  2 cups sweet or sour cream  
  1 eggs, beaten  
  ½ cup sugar  
  1 ½ tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon vanilla

Heat cream but do not boil. Combine eggs, sugar, and flour. Stir into cream and cook until thick enough to coat a spoon. Add vanilla and cool slightly. Fill each piece of dough with cream filling.

*Crumb topping*
1 cup sugar
1 cup flour
½ cup butter

Combine ingredients, and sprinkle over filled kuchen. Bake at 350° F [180° C] for 30 minutes, or until brown. Slice in wedges before serving.

- Apple cake

*(From Beyond Domestic Science: Recipes from Betsy-Tacy)*

½ cup butter
½ cup sugar
1 egg
2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
Pinch of salt
¼ cup milk

Cream butter and sugar well. Add egg. Mix in flour, baking powder, and salt, alternately with milk. Spread in two well-greased 9-inch pans

5 apples, peeled and sliced
½ cup sugar
Grated rind of one lemon
1 teaspoon cinnamon

Stew the apples, sugar, and lemon rind until apples are tender. Spread on top of batter. Sprinkle with cinnamon.
½ cup butter  
½ cup flour  
½ cup sugar

Mix well and spread over apples. Bake at 350° F [180° C] for 30-35 minutes. Serve with whipped cream.

Playlists and musical suggestions

- Soundtracks from favorite film adaptations
- Swedish radio
- Children’s Lit playlist
- Betsy-Tacy and Tib playlist
- Good old fashioned cottagecore

Your Turn

Njut! Lycka till med ditt köksäventyr!