

Cromarty Courthouse Learning Zone

Making a traditional Scram Scone Chielachie

without using scales



Recipes today are easy. All the quantities of ingredients are measured for you and you are given detailed instructions. Copy those and the recipe should turn out OK.

What happened in the past when there were no recipe books and no measuring scales, though? Well, people cooked simpler and more repetitive food, especially if they were poor. Poor people in Cromarty and Resolis lived mostly on oatmeal and herring and anything else they could catch or grow. It was usually women who would do the cooking and girls learned to cook 'by eye' – by watching their mums. Mums would say things like 'you've a light hand for a guid scam scone' or 'you need cool hands for pastry'.

This recipe for Scram Scone is given in the old-fashioned way, by eye. Have a go and see how it turns out – and if you make a delicious Chielachie, don't forget to send us a picture of it via the website at www.cromarty-courthouse.org.uk. It's always difficult to know where to start nibbling first, isn't it – his head? Or his toes?

You will need:

Some fine oatmeal (not porridge oats, too big)

Some plain white flour

Some butter

Some salt

Some baking powder (before baking powder was invented, the scone dough would probably have been left to ferment in a warm place before cooking)

Some milk or runny yogurt (or a mixture of the two)

A medium sized bowl

A girdle or heavy-based frying pan

Cooking 'by eye':

Wash your hands with soap and water.

1. Put some oatmeal in the bowl until it looks about a quarter full
2. Add some white flour to the bowl on top of the oatmeal until it looks about half full
3. Add two pinches of salt (between your thumb and forefinger)
4. Add about double the amount of baking powder
5. If you like, you can add a flavouring at this stage like two pinches of ginger or mixed spice or a little honey
5. Scoop up two balls of butter about the size of an egg each and add them to the bowl
6. With your fingers, rub the fat into the flour/oatmeal mixture until it looks a bit like breadcrumbs
7. Add milk or runny yogurt bit by bit, mixing each in gently with a spoon or your fingers before you add more
8. The mixture is ready when you can't see any more raw flour/oatmeal mixture. Don't mix it too much, just enough to bind it all together.
9. Put your frying pan or girdle on to a low temperature and gradually raise the heat to high. Girdles and frying pans get very hot, so use oven gloves. Put a very small piece of butter in the middle of the pan or girdle.
10. On a plate, shape your scam scone into one or more wee monies with raisins for two eyes, a smile/scowl and buttons
11. When the butter starts to sizzle add the scam scone (with a fish slice is best). When the top starts to dry out and bubbles start to show, flip it over and turn down the heat a little, adding a bit more butter (if it smells like it is burning) if need be around the edge. This will take about 5 minutes usually. If in doubt, turn down the heat a bit.
12. When it smells cooked, it's ready. Make sure your Scram Scone Chielachie doesn't run away! Enjoy with cheddar (if plain) or honey and butter (if sweet/spiced) or vegetarian equivalent.

