**History of Hardtack**

“Tis the song that is uttered in camp by night and day,
‘Tis the wail that is mingled with each snore;
‘Tis the sighing of the soul for spring chickens far away,
‘Oh hard crackers, come again no more!’

‘Tis the song of the soldier, weary, hungry and faint,
Hard crackers, hard crackers, come again no more;
Many days have I chewed you and uttered no complaint,
Hard crackers, hard cracker, come again no more!”

-from a soldier’s poem called “Hard Times”

During the Civil War, the food given to soldiers was called rations. These rations usually consisted of salt pork, hardtack, coffee and sugar. Salt pork is made from pig bellies preserved with salt, which prevents it from rotting or molding.

Hardtack is a type of hard cracker. The ingredients for making hardtack are flour, salt, water, and a bit of fat. Hardtack became a very important ration because the food could last for years. Soldiers could put the hardtack in their haversack (a bag carried over the shoulder to hold food) and not have to worry that the hardtack would spoil.

Sometimes, hardtack became infested with weevils. Weevils were a small bug that enjoyed eating the tough biscuit. Due to the frequent weevil infestations, soldiers called the hardtack “worm castles.” Other names soldiers used for the hardtack were “tooth dullers” and “sheet iron crackers.” Soldiers invented these names because hardtack was so hard it could break the soldier’s teeth!

Look on the back of this sheet for a hardtack recipe to try out at home!

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Hardtack Recipe

Ingredients

- 6 pinches of salt
- 2 c. of flour
- ½ to ¾ c. water
- 1 tbs. of Crisco or vegetable fat

Instructions

- Mix the ingredients together into a stiff batter, knead several times, and spread the dough out flat to a thickness of ½ inch on a non-greased cookie sheet.
- Bake for one-half an hour at 400 degrees.
- Remove from oven, cut dough into 3-inch squares, and punch four rows of holes, four holes per row into the dough.
- Turn dough over, return to the oven and bake another one-half hour.
- Turn oven off and leave the door closed.
- Leave the hardtack in the oven until cool.
- Remove and enjoy!

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