

Fruit and Nut Jumbles

History:

Jumbles were an early form of shelf-stable cookie or biscuit, largely formed from nuts, dried fruits, sugar, and butter, sometimes boiled, as everything was boiled, and sometimes just packed together and hardened. Buttermilk jumbles have been around in England since the Middle Ages and were a simple mixture of nuts, flour, eggs, and sugar, with occasional other items for flavoring, such as dried fruits, anise, or caraway seeds. They traveled well because, like a hardtack, they were dense and hard, and they could be stored up to a year, often longer, without becoming stale. By the late 18th century, they were baked, and resembled a modern sugar cookie more than a hard biscuit. Jumbles were thought to have been brought to America on the *Mayflower* and in Jamestown before that, and we'll be taking a look at Martha Washington's own famous recipe from the 1700s for comparison. The one we're ultimately going to give you, however, will be modified slightly, for ease and immediate consumption, since you'll have a heckuva time hunting down illegal musk from the anal glands of civets and illegal ambergris from the bellies of sperm whales. Your jumbles might not be worth the jail time the black market will cost you. But then again ... they're pretty tasty. There are many different kinds of jumbles, so I'll give you a recipe for two, and you can decide which you like best! One is more of a pretzel-type cookie or biscuit, and the other is more of a hardened blob of nuts and dried fruits, with no dough.



Ingredients for Doughless Recipe (top picture):

- 2 Tbsp butter
- 1 c raisins or 1 c dried apricots (You can use any dried fruit or combination.)
- 2 eggs
- 1 c sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla
- ½ c chopped nuts (You can use any nut or combination of nuts.)
- ½ c shredded coconut
- 1 c graham cracker crumbs, finely crushed

Directions for Doughless Recipe:

Melt butter in skillet over low heat. Add raisins or dried fruit and stir. Beat eggs well in a separate bowl. Blend in sugar and beat. Add to fruit mixture. Cook over low heat for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat. Stir in vanilla, nuts, coconut, and crumbs. Drop by teaspoon onto wax paper. Let stand until set.

Ingredients for Modified Dough Recipe, based on 1830 dough recipe (bottom picture):

- 2 c soft butter
- 2 c white sugar
- 2 tsp nutmeg (You can add or adjust your own spices to suit your taste.)

2 tsp cinnamon
2 tsp ginger
3 medium eggs
6 c white flour

Original 1830 Recipe:

Two cups of butter, two of sugar, three eggs, as much flour as will make it thin, and any good spice you like.

Leah's Modifications for Dough Recipe, based on 1830 recipe:

Not too specific, huh? The above account of Historic Fort York's recipe from the Mess Establishment Officers' Brick Barracks for Jumbles, No. 115, originally comes from *The Cook Not Mad; or, Rational Cookery*, first published in New York in 1830, wherein there are four separate jumbles recipes. If you use the ingredients list we give you above, you'll get a modern equivalent of this 1830s officers' mess recipe. The texture is delicate, so handle gently, and feel free to add your own spices to taste. Cream butter and sugar until very light. Add spices. Whisk eggs to a pale yellow cream in a separate bowl. Blend whisked eggs into butter and sugar mixture. We recommend adding some nuts, even though these mass-produced, cheap military recipes don't call for it. Sift in flour, one cup at a time, until a tender but not sticky ball of dough is formed; use more or less as necessary. Roll out with a rolling pin on a floured surface, about ¼" thick, then cut with a cutter, OR roll into ropes or rings about 6" long, ¾" diameter. Bake in a moderate oven at 350° F on ungreased baking sheets for 12 to 15 minutes, without turning. Sprinkle the top with a light sugar or powdered sugar coating.

Martha Washington's 1700s Jumbles Recipe (everything is [sic]'ed):

To make Iumbals: Take a pound & a halfe of fine flowre & a pound of fine sugar, both searced & dried in an oven, 6 youlks, & 3 whites of eggs, 6 spoonfulls of sweet cream & as much rose water, fresh butter ye quantety of an egg. Mingle these together & make it into stiff paste. Work it a quarter of an hour then break it abroad, & put in as much annyseeds or carraway seeds as you shall think fit, & put in A little muske & ambergreece. roule them into roulz & make them in what forms you please. lay them on pie plates thin buttered, & prick them with holes all over. then bake them as you doe diet bread. If this quantety of eggs will not be enough to wet ye flour & sugar, put in 3 or 4 more, but no more cream, butter, not rosewater.

Modern Translation of Martha Washington's Recipe:

Though we don't recommend making Martha's jumbles from her *Martha Washington's Booke* [sic] of *Cookery* because they're just not that accurate or delicious, we're happy to give you the modern translation of this recipe, just for fun. Most old recipes required people to know already how to cook, so exact measuring wasn't necessary (or common). You'll need 1 ½ lbs all-purpose flour, 1 lb granulated sugar, 6 egg yolks, 3 egg whites, up to ¼ cup whipping cream to your personal tastes, 2 tablespoons rosewater, and an egg-sized lump of butter. Mix and knead the items for 15 minutes. Add in a small amount of aniseed or caraway, with a strong recommendation toward anise over caraway seeds. Martha's recipe will be a little strong on the seed spices for modern sensibilities, so we'd recommend not putting in as many as she calls for. Musk comes from the anal glandular secretions of a civet, and is illegal now. Amberggris is a greasy, musky substance produced in the digestive system of a sperm whale, so it's illegal to get from the source, and highly expensive to get from the market of collectors who procure it from beached whale remains. So, we'll skip those. Roll your dough into forms and place on a lightly greased pie plate or baking sheet. Prick with a fork. If the dough is too stiff, add up to 4 more eggs, but do not increase the amount of the other ingredients.

Adapted from respective notated sources, with the doughless recipe adapted from a 1970s Hospital Auxiliary Cookbook called *Cooking in General*, and all modified by Leah Angstman.