

Q5.9: What is the recipe for hardtack?

Recipes for hardtack vary from extremely simple to more elaborate. The simplest is:

6 parts flour to 1 part water, mix, knead, roll out thin, and bake until hard.

From: tecump@sulu.ucsb.edu (Dominic J. Dal Bello)

For about 10 crackers (1 ration):

3 cups flour

1 1/2 or so tsp baking soda

1 1/2 tsp salt

water to form to a workable dough.

Knead the dough. Crackers should be cut to about 3"x3" (although some contractors made 'em 5x5, even 7x7). When you cut the dough, I have found that it should not "pull away" - if it does, it is still too wet. With a nail, or similar object, punch about 16 holes in each cracker (4x4 pattern - although this was not the only way to do it). Put in oven at about 375F for about 50 minutes - this is what I find to work for me; different ovens may act differently. In any event, it should be brownish on the bottom. Your not "baking" cookies here, you are essentially trying to heat all the water out of the cracker. Take out and cool. - they should get hard.

"Evidence" indicates that hardtack was made with "self-rising" flour. If I recall right, however, no specifications have been found as to what the government actually called for. Some recipes call for oil, but I have found that it has no effect on the final product. In any event, experiment with kneading, etc., time to bake to get a final product which is a nice hard slab of flour.

From: zursch@solaris.wpd.sgi.com (Jeff Zurschmeide)

2 cups flour

1/2 cup buttermilk

2 tbsp baking soda

2 tbsp vegetable oil

salt to taste

water to consistency

Mix up well, (dry ingredients first, then wet) roll out thin, bake at 450 degrees about 15 minutes, or to tooth-breaking quality.

From Merle Kirck:

We make it for our Living History programs. here it is:

3 cups milk

8 cups plain flour

8 tbl spoons shortening (crisco)

6 tea spoon brown sugar (opt)

3 tea spoon salt

Mix, roll on floured board, to 1/2" thickness. cut into 3" squares, punch holes 3 rolls of 3 with ice pick, Lightly grease baking pan, Bake in oven 400 deg for 45 min or till golden brown, cool in open air. Don't store in plastic (no plastic in 1800's) because of moisture.

This recipe is the same they used except the sugar. We have found that a good dose of cinnamon, and not cooking it as long is good eatin'.