

Baking our way through Holy Week by Rachel Summers

I know flour is scarce, but my Facebook feed has been full of people comfort baking. My daughter in particular turns to baking when she feels stressed, and the nice thing about it is that not only is it good for the person making the treats, but also a nice surprise for everyone else in the household who gets to eat them!

I thought it might be a fun idea to share a recipe for each day in Holy Week, as a way of marking the time, and as a way of practicing mindful reflection as our busy hands allow our hearts and minds to be still.

Palm Sunday

A retro treat for you today, to kick off Holy Week, using dates from date palms, as palms were waved as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, and they give today its name. We're going to make **Date Slices**.

Ingredients:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1/2lb of stoned dates• 1 tsp of vanilla essence• 4oz of self raising flour• 1tsp of bicarbonate of soda• 4oz of oats• 4oz caster sugar• 4oz of margarine or butter.
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If you can get hold of one of those blocks of dates, that would be great. Or maybe you have some leftover dates from Christmas languishing at the back of the kitchen cupboard, which haven't made their way into any bizarre covid-19 dinners yet. You'll have to forgive me for the pre-decimal measurements- this is my lovely Auntie Margaret's old recipe, and I remember them from Sunday afternoon tea time from way back when.

Chop ½ lb of stoned dates, and put them in a saucepan along with 1/4pt of water. Bring them to the boil, and cook them until they're soft. Add 1 tsp of vanilla essence.

Meanwhile, mix 4oz of self raising flour with 1tsp of bicarbonate of soda. Stir in 4oz of oats and 4oz caster sugar, and then rub in 4oz of margarine or butter.

Press half of this mixture into the base of a greased shallow tin, and as you do so, remember the cloaks that the crowd threw to the ground for Jesus and his donkey to walk over. Spread the dates over this, and then add the other half of the mixture. With each layer that you spread, imagine something from your life that you are placing beneath the feet of Jesus, just as the crowd did back then.

Bake in a medium oven at GM4 for 20-30 minutes until browned. Enjoy them with a hot drink, and sing a song or a hymn that fits the story for today- 'We have a king who rides a donkey', or 'Ride on, ride on in majesty' are two that come to mind for me.

Monday of Holy Week

For this Monday of Holy Week, I am choosing to remember the story of Jesus in the temple. Not the boy Jesus, getting lost and being found in the temple, his Father's house, discussing the law and the prophets with wisdom far beyond his years. This story is the one where Jesus enters the temple and finds it full of people buying and selling, and cheating each other. He thunders, 'This places is meant to be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves!' Sometimes we feel that anger isn't a very Christian emotion, but feeling righteous anger can be a very holy thing indeed, if it causes us to act and to change things that need changing.

Ingredients:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 200g of biscuits (digestives or rich tea biscuits work well)• 135g of butter or margarine• 200g of chocolate• 2 or 3 tbsp of golden syrup• 100g of mini marshmallows- or chopped up normal size marshmallows• 100g of other yummy stuff
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Put 200g of biscuits (digestives or rich tea biscuits work well) in a bag, and bash them with a rolling pin until they're well smashed up. As you bash, bring to mind the injustices in the world that you feel angry about.

Melt 135g of butter or margarine with 200g of chocolate and 2 or 3 tbsp of golden syrup. You can get away with less chocolate if you can't find much- or have eaten your emergency cooking chocolate stash- by adding a bit more butter, some sugar, preferably light brown muscavado, and cocoa powder instead.

Tip the biscuits into the melted mixture, along with 100g of mini marshmallows- or chopped up normal size marshmallows if that's all you can find- and up to 100g of other yummy stuff you've got in your cupboard. Dried fruit is good. We often use hoop cereal. Maybe you've got some chocolate chips, or some chocolate confectionary bars that could be chopped up and added in? As you add all your different ingredients, think about the different ways in which people find solutions to problems in the world.

Mix it all together, and tip it into a baking tin, smoothing it right into the corners. Chill, and cut slices to eat, as you chat together about where you see that things are wrong, and ways in which you can work for God's justice and peace.

Tuesday of Holy Week

Jesus not only smashed things up in the temple, but also returned to it to share teaching with those inside. One of the things he spoke about was the law. Jesus summed up the entirety of the books of the law with two simple and easy to remember ideas- love God, and love your neighbour. Simple and easy to remember; not so easy to do in practice!

Ingredients:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 250g of butter or margarine• 260g of caster sugar• 1 egg• 1 tsp of vanilla essence• 1tsp of baking powder• ½ tsp of salt• 650g of plain flour• Butter• Icing sugar• Food coloring (optional)
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Today we'll make **heart shaped biscuits** to remind us of Jesus' summary of the law. Cream together 250g of butter or margarine and 260g of caster sugar. Mix in one egg and a tsp of vanilla essence. Add 1tsp of baking powder and ½ tsp of salt to 650g of plain flour, then add this a little at a time to the butter and sugar mixture. There's quite a lot of flour to get through, so add it bit by bit and work it in carefully. Let the dough chill in the fridge for half an hour before rolling it out.

While the dough is chilling, draw a heart shape on a piece of paper. We are going old-fashioned style for these biscuits, because I'm assuming you don't have a drawer of random biscuit cutters that have just been waiting for this moment. If you do have a heart shaped cutter, feel free to ignore me for this paragraph! My ancient baking book assumes nobody has shaped cutters, and suggests that you draw a template, then use it by laying it on the dough and cutting round it with a knife. And this really does work fine, much better than you'd expect. If you'd like to be a bit more high tech, fashion a heart shape out of a strip of card, and tape it together. Wrap this all in aluminium foil, and voila! Your own bespoke heart cutter!

You all back with me now? Good. Roll out the dough, and cut out heart shapes. You'll need an even number- why? You'll find out in a minute. Pop them on a baking tray, and into an oven at 180 degrees/GM4 for about ten minutes, then leave them to cool.

Mix up some buttercream icing. I can't give you measurements for this because I do it by eye and by intuition! Apologies. Basically spoon yourself some butter or margarine into a bowl, add a good heap of icing sugar and beat it in. Keep adding more icing sugar until it feels nice and thick. If you have some pink or red food colouring in the cupboard, add a little of this, too. You're going to use the icing to sandwich the biscuits together, two at a time. With each biscuit, you can remember Jesus's words as you stick them together- Love God, and Love your neighbour.

As you have a cup of tea and share them, maybe virtually with family and friends, you can talk together about ways in which you keep both of those laws.

Wednesday of Holy Week

The Wednesday of Holy Week is often the day in which we remember Judas, agreeing to betray Jesus for the price of thirty pieces of silver. I don't have a recipe for thirty pieces of silver, but maybe thirty pieces of **golden anzac biscuit** will do instead? Judas was a passionate man with a strong belief in freedom, and strong ideas about what it would look like and how it would come about. There is nothing wrong with having strong ideas and being passionate about things, but as with Judas, we need to ensure that we keep listening to God, to hear his solutions, his timings, and to see his kingdom in his way.

Ingredients:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ½ cup of butter or margarine• 2 tbsp of golden syrup• 1tsp of bicarbonate of soda• 1 cup plain flour• 1 cup of oats• 1 cup of desiccated coconut• 1 cup of brown sugar
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As you melt together ½ cup of butter or margarine, and 2 tbsp of golden syrup, allow yourself to give some of your rigid ideas of ways things should be done over to God, and as the butter melts, remind yourself to listen to God for his ways, and his timings.

Mix 1tsp of bicarbonate of soda with 2tbsp of boiling water, mix this with the melted butter mixture, and then pour all of this into a bowl filled with 1 cup plain flour, 1 cup of oats, 1 cup of desiccated coconut, and 1 cup of brown sugar. Mix well, and roll spoonfuls of mixture into balls, and place them, well spaced out on a baking tray. Bake at 180 degrees/GM4 for 15-20 minutes.

Eat, thoughtfully, with a hot drink, remembering how easy it can be to fool ourselves into believing we are doing the right thing, and how hard it can be to trust that God's timing is right.

Maundy Thursday

On Maundy Thursday, we sometimes celebrate with a seder meal, the meal of the Jewish festival of Passover. It's very possible that Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover meal, and the edible re-enacting that goes on in this is a great way of understanding the story of Exodus, and also of putting some of the things said and done at the Last Supper into a context.

One of the dishes on the Seder plate is **charoset**, a mixture of apples, walnuts, cinnamon, and honey, to look like the mortar and clay bricks the Israelites had to build while slaves in Egypt. I thought this would be rather tasty inside a turnover.

Ingredients:	For the pastry <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 120g of butter frozen in freezer• 50g of chilled butter into cubes• 300g plain flour• pinch of salt For the filling <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1-2 apples• walnuts (optional)• cinnamon or another spice• honey• milk or egg for brushing• demerara sugar to top
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First up, then, you'll need to make yourself some pastry. And if it's a turnover, it really needs to be rough-puff pastry, doesn't it. So stick 120g of butter in the freezer, and cut 50g of chilled butter into cubes. Tip the butter cubes into a bowl containing 300g plain flour and a pinch of salt, and rub them in using your fingertips until the mixture looks like breadcrumbs. Add a little water until it forms into a dough, and roll it out into a rectangle.

Get the butter out from the freezer, and grate half of it onto the bottom two thirds of the dough. Fold the uncovered part of dough down over the grated butter, then fold the bottom part up over the top. Turn it a quarter turn, roll it out again, and repeat this- grate butter over the bottom two thirds, fold down the top, fold up the bottom. All that hard work rolling and grating and wrapping can get you thinking of the way the Israelites had to work as slaves in Egypt, mixing mud for bricks, moulding it, stacking it, all under the hot sun. Think of what you feel enslaved to, that you need freedom from, and begin to feel the same tug towards freedom felt by people throughout the generations. Wrap it all up, and leave it in the fridge to chill while you get on with making the charoset.

For this, chop up an apple or two, and mix it with some walnuts if you have some hiding in your cupboard, some cinnamon or another spice, and some honey. Mix it until it forms a lumpy brownish paste. Roll the ruff puff pastry out, and cut it into triangles. Blob a spoonful of charoset into the middle of each triangle, and fold it over, pressing down around the edges with a fork, and pricking a little hole in the middle of the bulge for the steam to escape. You might like to brush these with milk or egg, and maybe sprinkle on some demerara sugar to give them an extra crunch, before baking them for twenty minutes at 200C/GM6.

Eat them, as free people, reclining to your left as you do when celebrating a seder meal. Only non-slaves could eat while reclining, and you can eat these with joy in your heart, knowing that freedom is coming for all of God's people.

Good Friday

What else could we cook today apart from **Hot Cross Buns**! The great thing about making a yeasted bun, is that it's something you spend time with, and then come back to, over time. Some church traditions have a service between 12 and 3, marking the hours Jesus spent on the cross- you might like to spend that time prayerfully making hot cross buns, with each time you come back to the baking, stepping back into the story, re-immersing yourself in the pain and the wonder of Good Friday.

Ingredients:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50g of butter• 300ml of hot milk• 1 egg• 500g of strong bread flour (or plain flour)• 1tsp of salt• 75g of caster sugar (use what sugar you can)• a sachet of yeast• dried fruit• 1tsp of spice (cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg or a mix)• Flour and water mixed to a paste• Apricot or marmalade to glaze
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The first job you need to do to make hot cross buns is to heat up some milk and some butter. You can either do this by adding 50g of butter to 300ml of hot milk, stirring until it melts, and leaving it to cool to a hand-warm temperature, or melting the butter separately in the microwave and mixing it with milk that has been warmed to hand-warm temperature. As the butter melts and mixes in with the milk, you might like to think of the moment in the Eucharist when the priest mixes a little water in with the wine, and prays, 'by the mystery of this wine and water, may we share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity'. The Jesus we follow, being both fully human and fully God, undergoing today the most brutal of human punishments.

Fill a mixing bowl with 500g of strong bread flour (I'd choose white, though it depends on what you can get! If you can't find bread flour, plain flour will work; the buns just won't rise as much). Add in 1tsp of salt, 75g of caster sugar (again, use what sugar you can), and a sachet of yeast. If you can't get hold of yeast, but have got a sourdough starter going in your house, I have found an overnight sourdough version online, but have yet to give it a try. As you add the dry ingredients, think through what you are laying at the foot of the cross today.

Make a well in the centre, pour in the warm milk and butter, and add an egg. Mix this well, first with a wooden spoon, then with your hands, until you have a sticky dough. Now for the fun bit! Sprinkle some flour onto a surface, and knead it, by stretching and folding, until it's turned nice and silky and pulls out smoothly. Leave it in a bowl, covered with something like a clean plastic bag or a shower hat, for an hour, so that the yeast can begin to work and make the dough rise.

After an hour, it's time to add the dried fruit and spices, so that the hot cross buns taste like the real deal. I don't know what you've got in your house. Certainly don't be heading out to buy stuff specially! If we can't glory in a bit of a bodge job at the moment, when else can we? I've got some sultanas and raisins, but no currants. I don't have peel either, though do have some oranges, so might chop the orange peel up small and include that. I doubt I'll actually get round to crystallising it myself in a sugar solution, but if that sounds like fun, you

go for it! A chopped up apple would do for fruit if your dried fruit is scarce. I've got a tub of cinnamon, but mixed spice, or ground cloves, or even ground ginger would probably do. 1tsp of spice should do it. I'll leave it to you to put in as much dried fruit as you fancy -I seldom measure it anyway even in times of plenty! Knead these in to the dough, as you do so remembering the way Jesus was pummelled at the hands of the soldiers, and of how dough needs to be pummelled before it can begin to rise, and to turn into bread to feed us all.

Shape the dough into balls, and place them on a floured baking tray. Cover and leave for another hour to rise. Mix up flour and water paste, and use this to pipe (if you have the equipment) or dollop (if you don't!) a cross over each bun. Remember Jesus and his words on the cross, and quietly thank him for his sacrifice. Bake in a hot oven (220C/GM7) for about twenty minutes until they look golden brown. Once out of the oven, gently heat some marmalade or apricot jam, and paint this over the top of them to make a sticky glaze. Enjoy, buttered if you like, with a cup of tea, and sing or listen to your favourite songs or hymns about the cross as you eat them.

Holy Saturday

A quiet day today. A day of quiet anticipation for us; a day of quiet despair for the disciples. And a day where marvellous things were about to happen, unseen. A day where the world was about to be turned upside-down.

So what better to make than **pineapple upside-down cake**? My kids will be over the moon when we get to this part. It's their favourite. You start by creating the glaze and the decoration, but right in the bottom of the tin. Mix together 50g butter or margarine, and 50g light brown sugar, and spread this over the bottom of a cake tin and a little way up the sides. Open a tin of pineapple rings, and place these in a lovely pattern all over the base, putting glaze cherries in each hole. Here is all our glorious hope for Easter- but we can't see it yet. We're going to hide it under some sponge cake mixture.

Ingredients:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50g butter or margarine• 50g light brown sugar• 1 tin pineapple rings• Glaze cherries• 100g butter or margarine• 100g caster sugar• 100g self-raising flour• 1 tsp baking powder• 1tsp vanilla essence• two tbsps of the juice or syrup from the pineapples
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Mix together 100g butter or margarine, 100g caster sugar, and 100g self-raising flour, along with 1 tsp baking powder, 1tsp vanilla essence, plus two tablespoons of the juice or syrup from the pineapples (you can drink the rest- baker's treat). Pour this over the pineapples and glaze cherries, until they are completely covered, just like Jesus' body, hidden from sight behind the great stone at the entrance to his tomb.

Bake for 35mins at 180 degrees/GM4, then take out of the oven. Carefully without burning yourself, up-end it onto a plate. All that hidden beauty and colour can now be seen, like the life that bursts into the world again at springtime, like the life of Jesus that fills the world with love and goodness.

Eat with ice cream if your sweet tooth can bear it, and talk about times you felt all hope was lost, and of the joy that came after weeping.

Easter Sunday

On an ordinary Easter day you might not really have much time for baking. You'd be going to church, maybe visiting your family, perhaps going for a long walk to look for signs of spring in the countryside. This Easter isn't going to look like any Easter you've celebrated before; but at least this year you'll have time to bake.

Ingredients:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• marshmallows• a tin of ready made croissant mix• melted butter• sugar• cinnamon
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And you may have managed to buy chocolate eggs and if so, enjoy them! This recipe is something quite different, and is, in fact, a chocolate free zone. You'll need marshmallows, a tin of ready made croissant mix, melted butter, a bowl of sugar and cinnamon, and a bun tin. If you can't find croissant mix, I reckon you can get away with making some bog standard shortcrust pastry.

Pick up a marshmallow. This is the body of Jesus, taken down from the cross on Good Friday. Dip the marshmallow in the melted butter and the cinnamon and sugar. This is what normally happened to a body before it was buried- it was anointed with sweet smelling spices and oils as a mark of respect, but this didn't happen with Jesus, his burial was all in too much of a rush before sundown at the start of Sabbath. This is what the women, arriving early in the morning, were planning to do, a couple of days late. Wrap the marshmallow up inside a triangle of croissant mix, making sure there aren't any holes, and dip this dough ball in melted butter and the cinnamon and sugar mix. This is like the body being wrapped in graveclothes. Pop it in a hole in the bun tin, and bake them all in a hot oven for 10-15 minutes. The oven is like the tomb.

When you open the oven again, give the buns a few minutes to cool slightly, then eat them hot. As you break them open, discover what has happened to the body inside! It is gone! Just like the women arriving early to anoint Jesus's body, who discovered that instead of a body resting in a tomb, there was an empty space, angels, and Jesus, very much alive.

I'm imagining you eating your Easter treats on a splendid spring day, with birdsong coming in through your window, and flowers on your table. I'm hoping you'll have some glorious Easter music blasting through your speakers, and between bites you'll be singing along, full of resurrection joy in your heart.