

British Culture 4 - British Food

The Full English Breakfast

The traditional full English breakfast is composed of sausages, mushrooms, bacon, baked beans, and eggs. The sausages are cooked first for 12 minutes, then the mushrooms (5 minutes), and finally the bacon. The eggs can be poached, fried or scrambled. Some people also add black pudding, tomatoes, hash browns (= potato preparations), and toast. A full English breakfast is usually served with tea.



Fish and Chips

Fried fish was introduced in the UK in the 17th century by the Spanish and the Portuguese. Chips were also introduced at the same period. They came from Belgium.

Fish and chips became a popular dish during the 19th century. People liked it because it was cheap and tasty. It was an important dish during WWII because it was the only food that was not rationed.

In the past, fish and chips was served in newspapers. Mushy peas are usually served with fish and chips. Fish and chips comes in fifth place among Britain's favourite dishes.



Haggis

Haggis is the national dish of Scotland. It consists of the heart, liver and lung of a sheep minced with suet, onions, oatmeal, and seasonings (salt, pepper, spices). All the ingredients are boiled in the stomach of the sheep. Haggis is usually served with tatties (mashed potatoes) and neeps (mashed turnips).

The Scots usually eat haggis on Burns Night (January 25) to celebrate the birth of Robert Burns, a Scottish poet and lyricist, and at Hogmanay (the Scottish New Year's Eve celebration).



Welsh Rarebit

Welsh rarebit is a dish made of melted cheese, milk or cream, seasonings, and sometimes ale (= beer), served on hot toast. Here is the recipe:

1. Lightly toast the bread. Place on a baking tray, and spread with butter.
2. Add the grated cheese and 2 tablespoons of beer to a saucepan. Place the saucepan over a medium heat, and stir the cheese continuously until it has melted. Add a teaspoon of wholegrain mustard and grind in a little pepper. Keep stirring.
3. When thick and smooth, pour over each piece of toast. Make sure you spread it right to the edges to stop the toast from burning.
4. Place under the grill for a couple of minutes or until golden brown.



Colcannon

Colcannon is an Irish dish. The two main ingredients are mashed potatoes and cabbage. It is traditionally made on All Saints' Day or Halloween.

Four charms are put in the colcannon: a button, a thimble, a ring and a coin. If you get the button, you will remain a bachelor. If you get the thimble, you will remain a spinster. If you get the ring, you will get married. If you get the coin, you will be rich.



Biscuits

1) Scones

A scone is a small round cake of Scottish origin. Scones are made of white flour, baking powder, sugar, eggs, milk, and sometimes dried raisins. They are usually eaten with butter, jam and cream spread on it.

The word 'scone' first appeared in a translation of *The Aeneid* in 1513. The word 'scone' may come from a Dutch word (*schoonbrot* meaning 'fine bread'), a German word (*schonbrot* also meaning 'fine bread') or a Gaelic word (*sgon* meaning 'large mouthful').



2) Muffins

The first appearance of the word 'muffin' in a book dates back to 1703. The word 'muffin' may come from the French word 'moufflet' which means 'soft' when it is used to describe bread, or from the German word 'muffe' meaning 'cake'.



3) Shortbread

Shortbread is a type of biscuit / cookie of Scottish origin. The main ingredients are flour, sugar and butter. Shortbread dates back to the 12th century and became more refined during the 16th century. Shortbread is particularly delicious with tea.



Desserts

1) Bread pudding

Bread pudding was born in England in the 13th century. This dessert was also called 'a poor man's pudding'. It was made with stale leftover bread, water, a little sugar and spices. Today bread and butter pudding is made with fresh bread or even brioche, milk, eggs, sugar, and spices.



2) Trifle

A trifle is a dessert which consists of different layers of sponge cake, custard cream, fruit, jelly, and whipped cream on top. Some people add some alcohol like port, sweet sherry or Madeira wine to moisten the sponge cake, other people use fruit juice instead.

