

# COOKING UP HISTORY



Detail from "A Basic Cake and Its Variations"  
by Nelle Hooper, pg. 11, *New York Tribune*, March 28, 1920.

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## INTRODUCTION

Our collections include thousands of cookbooks and recipes, including [Thomas Jefferson's recipe for macaroni and cheese](#) and [for ice cream](#), cookbooks dating as far back as the 16th century—many of which are digitized—research guides to [American community cookbooks](#) from the 20th century, and even [Rosa Parks's recipe for "featherlite pancakes"](#) [NOTE: it contains peanuts!].

In this activity, we recreate a recipe printed 100 years ago in the *New York Tribune*. Suggested for all ages.

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## MATERIALS

Flour, eggs, butter, sugar, baking powder, milk, cocoa  
Mixing bowl, measuring cups and spoons, mixing spoon, and your oven!

Copy of [this page](#) in the *NY Tribune*, via [Chronicling America](#), the Library's searchable database of American historic newspapers, 1789–1963

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## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Look at the page together and select a recipe--will it be a gingerbread cake? Chocolate sauce? Cocoa drop cookies? Or maybe griddle cakes?
2. Follow the recipe.
3. Eat or drink and enjoy!

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## EXTENSIONS

- 🕒 Use the page selection tool in [Chronicling America](#) or the forward and back arrows to explore what was happening in New York on that date. For younger children, look at advertisements to explore products and prices and to discuss daily life then and now. For older children, the front page can be the prompt for a discussion about the end of World War I and the beginning of prohibition.
- 🕒 Explore our ["Today in History"](#) page to discover events from this week in other years in history.

# 2020 TIPS FOR 1920s RECIPES

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## CHOCOLATE SYRUP



- 1. Mix the sugar and cocoa together thoroughly before you gradually stir in the warm water.
- 2. Simmer it gently for 5 minutes, not 3. Stir it often and keep the heat low so it doesn't boil over.
- 3. Use the finished syrup to try the chocolate ginger cream recipe in the article. You can also pour it over ice-cream or make banana splits!

## SIMPLE COCOA



- 1. Mix together the two tablespoons of cocoa powder with the sugar before you stir in the water.
- 2. You can warm the milk in the microwave or a pan. But don't let it boil - see what the recipe says about that!
- 3. Add more sugar and milk to taste.

## STANDARD BUTTER CAKE



- 1. Increase the amount of milk to 1 ¼ cups.
- 2. "Work" or beat the butter and sugar together with an electric mixer or beater if you prefer 2020 convenience over a 1920 wooden spoon and aching arm!
- 3. Be sure to use a clean bowl and whisk to beat the egg whites.
- 4. For flavoring, add 2 teaspoons of vanilla extract.
- 5. Bake in a 9 x 4" loaf pan for about 50 minutes at 350 degrees. Test the cake by sticking a toothpick in the middle - if there's gooey batter on the toothpick put it back in the oven for a few more minutes.
- 6. Leave the baked cake in the loaf pan for 10 minutes, then turn it out onto a rack to cool completely.
- 7. Once you've tried the basic cake, experiment with some of the variations suggested in the recipe.