

Damper Bread

Normally I would be making this on a campfire using a frying pan cooking the dough over the embers of the fire. But today we are going to use the Trangia Cooking Stove to cook the dough and make Damper Bread.

What is Damper Bread?

Proper damper bread is Australian unleavened bread traditionally made on the coals of the fire by Indigenous and Aboriginal people, and the early settlers.

Australia has traditional bread called damper, also known as bush bread; delicious unleavened bread baked on hot coals or in the oven and that can be ready in no time.

Damper was first mentioned in a book of memoirs edited by Barron Field, a judge at the Supreme Court of New South Wales from 1817 to 1824. According to the Australian Dictionary Centre, the name is derived from a Lancashire expression meaning "something that suppresses appetite".

Damper is one of the most emblematic symbols of bushfood, also known as bush tucker. It has been recognized as a staple food of the bush for decades.

It was made famous by Australian cowboys who cooked this bush bread in the hot coals of their campfire.

What is the Origin of Damper Bread?

Damper was originally developed by breeders, who needed a way to transport food to remote areas. They were sometimes absent for long weeks, with little or no access to purchases of food and supplies, so they were unable to transport spoiled food. It was therefore their daily bread which was also baked very quickly and very easily.

By simply transporting flour and salt and having access to water, shepherds could make their own bread, using these three ingredients.

Traditionally, the dough was baked directly in the ashes of the campfire but over the years it has become common to bake it in the oven, although baking in the ashes is still a very common method in Australia today.

A more careful method, and one that is commonly used today, is to bake the damper in a campfire by placing the dough in a cast iron pot to avoid having to

brush the ashes before eating it. The recipes have evolved to include the addition of milk, butter and many other ingredients.

There are other baking methods. For example, the dough can be wrapped around a stick hanging over the fire.

Today, damper bread in the UK is a bit of shorthand for bread cooked on a stick over a campfire, but the two things are quite different. Campfire bread is pushed onto or wrapped around a stick, whereas the traditional Australian damper bread is a soda bread-style loaf.

This campfire bread is easy to make around an open fire because the bread dough doesn't include yeast and there is no rising time. Plus anything cooked on a stick and campfire is fun!

What is Bush Tucker?

Considered a base of all Australian backpackers, bush tucker is above all linked to a culture, that of a people who have occupied these lands for millennia: the Aborigines.

The term bush tucker is typically Australian and means "food from nature". It designates all of the animal and plant species living on this continent and allowing humans to eat in the bush (the Australian outback).

Before the arrival of Europeans in Sydney in 1788, the aborigines lived by feeding on the particular flora and fauna of this Australian bush living from hunting and picking: kangaroo, wallaby, crocodile, and emu were their favourite meats.

They ate a lot of fish like barramundi and Tasmanian trout. Insects such as moths, white worms, lizards and snakes were also eaten.

Berries and wild fruits such as Quandong, Lilly Pilly and the famous Macadamia nuts were harvested.

Even today, certain indigenous culinary traditions are widespread. Kangaroo and emu meats are sold at the supermarket and are said to be delicious.

According to Australian tradition, the swagmen were seasonal workers who moved through the bush from one farm to another, with only their sleeping bag (matilda) and their can (a metal box for boiling water or to prepare the stew).

This nomadic lifestyle has given birth to a very particular culinary tradition of dishes cooked over embers and on high heat. The most famous preparation is the Damper Bread.

Ingredients

- 600g (4 cups) Self - Raising Flour
- 500ml (approx. 2 cups) Water (or Milk/Dairy Free Milk) – you might not need all of this
- Two Pinches of Salt
- 1 Tablespoon Butter, Softened
- Mix With: Wild Garlic or Three Cornered Leek or Cheese, Raisins, Sultanas and Currants, or Chocolate Buttons. Blackberries, Blueberries or Strawberries and even Apples and Bananas.
- Toppings Add: Cheese, Melted Butter, Chocolate Spread, Jam, Honey or Peanut Butter or Peppers. Melted Butter, and then dip in Cinnamon Sugar, Melted Butter, and then dip in Grated Cheese or Sprinkle with Garlic Powder or topped with Home-made Garlic Butter.
- Butter or dash of Cooking Oil for cooking pan may be needed, but try without first.

Recipe Notes

The dough is sticky! It's a messy process to mix the ingredients, so make sure you have somewhere to wash and dry your hands. Tea towels are a necessity.

Some recipes include butter. You can rub in a couple of tablespoons of butter at the dry ingredients stage if you want richer dough or leave it out and spread the butter on the bread when it's cooked!

Make it Gluten - Free

We have tried this campfire bread with gluten-free flour and it comes out just fine. Get the best quality gluten-free flour you can and use it while it's fresh.

Make it Dairy - Free

I prefer the bread with water, as classic bread dough would be made, but many recipes substitute milk. Frankly, as the recipe doesn't taste of much, milk gives it a bit of extra depth.

Equipment You Will Also Need:

- Kitchen Scales
- Measuring Jug
- Large mixing bowl
- Wooden spoon
- Wooden Spatula
- Trangia Cooking Stove

- Matches
- Methylated Spirit
- Hand-wipes and Hand Gel
- Paper Plates/Bowls
- Kitchen Towel

How to Make Damper Bread:

Step 1

- Use the kitchen Scales and weigh out 600g (4 cups) Self - Raising Flour and put into a bowl.
- Add Two Pinches of Salt to the bowl.
- Add 1 Tablespoon Butter, Softened to the bowl
- Add Flavour Ingredients as to your taste for Example Wild Garlic.
- Mix all Dry Ingredients together.

Step 2

- Use the Measuring Jug to measure out 500ml (approx. 2 cups) Water (or Milk/Dairy Free Milk).
- Add the Water, Milk or Dairy Free Milk.
- Add it a little at a time, stirring as you go.
- Eventually it will get too difficult to mix using the spoon and you'll have to get your hands in there and mix!
- Knead the dough until it looks and feels like dough. It will be stretchy and soft.

Step 3

- Take a crumpet-size piece of dough.
- Flatten the dough between your palms or flatten in the pan using your spatula.
- Cook the dough in your pan using the Trangia Cooking Stove.
- Turn the dough regularly, at least once every five minutes.
- Just keep checking back regularly and turning the bread it will take about 15 minutes to cook all the way through and become golden brown and look like bread, it will puff up a bit too.

Step 4

- If you have not added any flavouring to the dry mixture and made plain Damper Bread then either eat plain or why not add a topping of your choice (See Ingredients List) for example Jam.
- Eat and Enjoy!

<https://www.196flavors.com/australia-damper/>

