**“Just Loafing Around”**

Growing up, date loaf was the last survivor in the cake tins. Mum baked like she was feeding an army. She grew up as one of six children, on a farm, who along with farmhands, and random visitors all needed feeding. It was like a family-run catering gig where keeping the tins full was a never-ending battle.

Date loaf, fruit loaf, fruit cake, none of it held any appeal. As children my younger brother Ross and I used to trade our home baking for the exotic “packet” biscuits that our friends would bring in their lunches.

When James and I lived in London, we would often have a Sunday lunch with James’s relatives in Chalfont -St -Peter. Betty was an excellent cook and one afternoon served this fruit loaf with a slice of sharp cheddar, assuring me that they worked well together. I was hooked. We used to make an apple and cheddar cake at Clark’s Library Café that while not the most popular certainly had its admirers.

You can use any mixture of dried fruits. I especially like the tartness of dried cranberries. Make a cup of tea, slice a piece of Betty’s loaf and add a slither of sharp cheese. I dare you to try it.

Julie

**Betty’s English Fruit Loaf**

340g mixed dried fruits (sultanas, currants, cranberries or raisins)

300mls black tea- hot (Earl Grey)

1 orange - zest

250g self-raising flour

200g brown sugar

2 eggs

* In a large bowl, pour the hot tea over the dried fruits and orange zest.
* Leave overnight if possible or at least until cold.
* Lightly beat the eggs and add to the cold tea and fruit mix.
* Add the flour and sugar and mix well.
* Pour the batter into a lined loaf tin and bake at 160 fan for 60 - 80 minutes.
* Allow to cool then slice and serve with butter or a slice of sharp cheddar cheese.

Thanks Betty