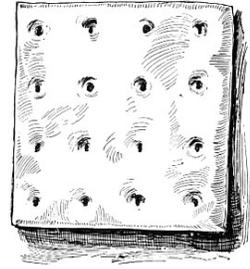
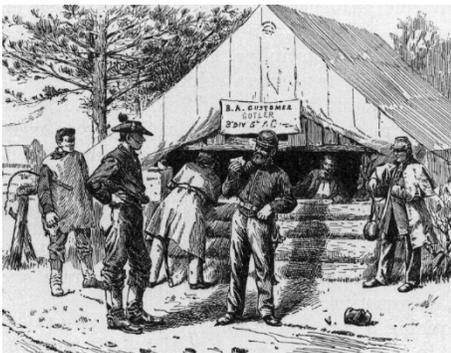


Hardtack

During the Civil War one of the most common meals for soldiers was a cracker-like food called hardtack. Hardtack is made from flour, water, and salt. It could last a long time- there is even hard tack from the Civil War in the museum at Manassas National Battlefield Park today! Soldiers really didn't like eating hardtack. It was known as "sheet iron crackers" or "tooth duller" because it was so hard. It also was known for getting wet, which allowed mold to grow in the boxes of it that were supplied to the Army. In addition, insects would sometimes lay their eggs in the hard tack giving it the nickname, "worm castles." Hardtack was important for the men to eat- it gave them energy they needed, and it was a big piece of their diet- so they tried to find all kinds of different ways to eat it.



Commonly, soldiers would soften their hardtack in coffee. This also was also a way to help kill the little maggots and worms that lived inside of it, allowing soldiers to skim them off of the top of the coffee. They would also break up the hardtack with the butt (the back part) of their rifles and throw it in



Civil War Camp Sutler

soups such as a stew called "lobscouse," which also included soldiers' rations of salt pork (which was preserved with salt to make it last a long time too), and any other things they could find to add to it. They also would soak hardtack in water and fry it in bacon fat or lard (animal fat) to make something they called "skillygalee." If a soldier could afford to spend some of their monthly pay, they might buy ingredients from a sutler, a merchant who sold goods to encamped soldiers. For example, soldiers would sometimes

mix hardtack with a can of condensed milk they bought from a sutler. However, sutlers often charged a lot of money for their supplies, so many men could not afford to pay for these goods because their money was needed to support their families back at home. Men sometimes would also forage, or look around an area, for additional ingredients that could be eaten with their hardtack.

The Confederates did not always have hardtack, because it was made from wheat flour, and wheat was not widely grown in most Confederate states, aside from Virginia and Georgia. The Confederates instead relied on two crops they grew to make their bread: corn and rice. In particular, they used corn to make something similar to hardtack that was known as "corn dodgers" or "Johnny cakes." This was a mixture of cornmeal, salt, and water cooked until it was just as dry and hard as the hardtack. Soldiers might try to make them taste a better too! They would use whatever grease or fat they could find and fry their Johnny cakes with it to

make something they called “cush” or “slosh.” People ate Johnny cakes before the Civil War and they still do today. However, recipes from before and after the war add ingredients that a Confederate soldier might not have had access to- like milk, sugar, and baking soda (see recipe below.)

Below you will find recipes for hardtack and Johnny cakes so that you can make them at home!

Make sure to ask permission and have help from an adult before using the oven.

Hardtack

Ingredients:

4 cups flour

2 teaspoons salt

1 cup of water (Add more or less as needed, up to another ½ cup.)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Mix ingredients in a bowl until they form a stiff, elastic dough but not dry or sticky. You may need to adjust the amount of water- so be careful as you add it!
3. Spread the dough about ½ inch thick onto a greased cookie sheet.
4. Bake for 30 minutes. Pull out of oven and let cool for 5 minutes.
5. With a bread knife or pizza cutter, divide the dough into 3x3 squares and poke a grid of holes with a cleaned nail, toothpick, or skewer. Flip pieces over. Be careful with this step!
6. Bake in oven for more 30 minutes or until lightly brown. Turn off the oven, leaving the hardtack inside until it cools.

Johnny Cakes

Ingredients:

2 cups of cornmeal

1 teaspoon baking soda

2/3 cup milk

½ teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 tablespoon sugar (optional)

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Mix ingredients in a bowl until a stiff batter is formed.
3. Divide into biscuits and place on a greased cookie sheet. You will be able to make about 8 with this recipe.
4. Bake in oven for more 20 minutes or until golden brown. Let cool for a few minutes.
5. Serve with butter, honey, or molasses.

Enjoy!!!

“Hard Tack Come Again No More”

Below are the lyrics to a song that was sung by soldiers in the Civil War. It is a parody, an imitation of something that is designed to be funny. Soldiers used the tune of a popular song written right before the start of the Civil War called, “Hard Times Come Again No More.” In this parody, the soldiers complain about hardtack; and in the last verse and chorus, they long for hardtack after being given something they considered worse- corn mush!

Here is the song; you can easily find recordings of it with an internet search of the song title if you want to listen along:

Let us close our game of poker, take our tin cups in our hand
As we all stand by the cook's tent door
As dried mummies of hard crackers are handed to each man.
O, [hard tack](#), come again no more!

CHORUS:

***'Tis the song, the sigh of the hungry:
"Hard tack, hard tack, come again no more."
Many days you have lingered upon our stomachs sore.
O, hard tack, come again no more!***

'Tis a hungry, thirsty soldier who wears his life away
In torn clothes—his better days are o'er.
And he's sighing now for whiskey in a voice as dry as hay,
"O, hard tack, come again no more!"
— CHORUS

'Tis the wail that is heard in camp both night and day,
'Tis the murmur that's mingled with each snore.
'Tis the sighing of the soul for [spring chickens](#) far away,
"O, hard tack, come again no more!"
— CHORUS

But to all these cries and murmurs, there comes a sudden hush
As frail forms are fainting by the door,
For they feed us now on horse feed that the cooks call mush!
O, hard tack, come again once more!

FINAL CHORUS

'Tis the dying wail of the starving:
"O, hard tack, hard tack, come again once more!"
You were old and very wormy, but we pass your failings o'er.
O, hard tack, come again once more!

Hardtack Activity Questions:

1. What is hardtack? Why do you think soldiers might not have liked it?
2. What did the soldiers try to do to make hardtack or Johnny cakes easier to eat?
3. Why do you think the soldiers wrote a song about hardtack?
4. Write your own verse to the song, "Hard Tack Come Again No More" describing your experience eating hardtack.
5. Pretend you are a soldier who has returned home after the war. How would you describe hardtack or Johnny cakes to your family?