

Bread and Butter Pudding: An Unacknowledged Australian Classic

September 2025

I was looking through Australian Geographics' *The Classic Australian Cookbook* looking for a recipe for Bread and Butter Pudding and was dismayed to find no recipe for it.¹ If Banana Bread gets a guernsey then the B & B pudding should get one. It's been around longer, is very accommodating of change, and stirs fond memories for my age cohort. It got into the *Country Women's Association's Cook Book. Seventy Years In The Kitchen*. My mum, who was no great or even good cook, made it regularly.

The criteria for being a Classic Australian dish in the Australian Geographic was vague:

This book celebrates classic Australian cooking – the dishes we invented, the food we grow here, and the recipes we've adopted as our own. This is food that carries the warm glow of happy times with friends and family, of tastes that were part of our childhood or flavours that make you feel alive right now ... What will always be Australian is delicious, fresh and exciting food shared around the kitchen table, the beach, the barbecue or backyard.²

Well, if Macaroni Cheese and Butter Chicken get a guernsey as classics, though neither was a dish Aussies invented only adopted, (and some of us South Asian Australians find Butter Chicken an abomination) then I reckon Bread And Butter Pudding fits the criteria as well. Also in its favour neither of them got into *The Country Women's Association Cook Book. Seventy Years in the Kitchen* while Bread And Butter Pudding did arguably, an imprimatur.³

The earliest recipe I found was in the first extant cookery book written by an Australian Edward Abbott's 1864 *English and Australian Cookery Book*.⁴

Bread And Butter Pudding – Wash and clean two ounces of currants, get ready four or five layers of bread and butter, put the latter in the dish, and between the layers put the currants, and over all put in a custard. Bake about three quarters of an hour.⁵

Since that time it has been a regular in cookery columns in newspapers, magazine and cookery books. Here's a peek into its first 100 years i.e. 1864-1964.

It was often suggested as a way to use stale bread.

A Nice Light Bread Pudding⁶

One slice of stale white bread, ½ pint of milk, 2 large eggs, 1 tablespoon of sugar, 1 tablespoon of butter, a pinch of salt, nutmeg or cinnamon.

Cut the bread into small squares about the size of dice, rejecting the crust. Melt the butter in a pie-dish, put in the bread and mix lightly with a fork, so that the butter is absorbed. Make a custard of the well-beaten eggs, milk, and sugar, pour over the bread, and leave it for an hour. Grate nutmeg or sprinkle cinnamon over the top, and bake in a moderate oven for about ½ an hour. NR sure it does not overcook, or it will be spoilt. This is a nice pudding for children or invalids. Do not use too much bread; a good half-cup is enough.

¹ Australian Geographic, *The Classic Australian Cookbook* 2021

² Introduction, *The Classic Australian Cookbook* Australian Geographic 2021 p.7

³ Bread And Butter Pudding, *The Country Women's Association Cook Book. Seventy Years in the Kitchen* Murdoch Books Australia 2009 p.307

⁴ Abbott, Edward, 'The English and Australian Cookery Book For The Many As Well As For The "Upper Ten Thousand"' Sampson Low, Son And Marston 1864

⁵ Abbott ... p.56

⁶ A Nice Light Bread Pudding, Rutledge Mrs. Forster, *The Goulburn Cookery Book* 1909 p. 94

Dried fruits were a staple ingredient.

Fruit Bread-and-Butter⁷

Three thin slices of buttered bread 1 pint of milk, 3 eggs, 1 tablespoon sugar, 2 heaped tablespoons washed sultanas, raisins or currants. Trim crusts off bread, cut into quarters, and place with fruit in an ovenproof dish. Beat eggs well, add milk and part of the sugar, and pour over the buttered bread in dish. Sprinkle the remainder of sugar on top and add grated nutmeg or powdered cinnamon. Bake on top shelf of slow oven.

Jam was sometimes used as an alternative to dried fruits.

Bread And Butter Pudding

Bread and butter pudding with fat sultanas or jam to provide an extra toothsomeness, or marmalade if this preserve is a favorite (and don't forget the less used lemon and ginger marmalades, they are really good!) will finish up the cut pieces of bread and butter which are so dry and unappetising if they reappear at a second meal.⁸

Candied peel was a popular ingredient.

Bread And Butter Pudding

Bread, butter, 1 tablespoon sugar, 2 eggs, 1 pint milk, 2oz. seeded raisins or sultanas, grated nutmeg, little candied peel. Grease piedish, cut bread in thin slices and spread on, place in piedish in layers, sprinkle each layer with a few sultanas, cut up candied peel, sugar and nutmeg. Beat eggs, add milk, pour all over bread and butter in piedish. Place piedish in tin of cold water and cook in hot oven till custard is set, about 25 minutes. The water in the tin prevents the eggs curdling.⁹

Spices were also used.

Bread And Butter Pudding¹⁰

Two thin slices of bread and butter, one tablespoon sugar, one pint milk, two eggs, one tablespoon currants or sultanas, grated nutmeg or cinnamon.

Cut the buttered bread unto squares and put in a greased pie dish. Sprinkle with sugar and currants. Beat the eggs well, add the milk and pour over. Grate nutmeg over top, and bake in a slow oven till set – 30 to 45 minutes.

Essences were used.

Bread And Butter Pudding¹¹

Spread two half-inch slices of bread with butter. Place the slices in a baking dish with buttered side down and sprinkle generously with raisins. Scald one can of milk, beat one egg, add one quarter cup of sugar and pour the hot milk over the beaten egg mixture; flavor with a few drops of vanilla and pour over the bread, cover and bake in a moderate oven about twenty minutes. Uncover and brown. Serve with a caramel sauce or cream.

⁷ Fruit Bread-and-Butter Old Favourites *The Gundagai Independent* 19 June 1948 p.7

⁸ Bread And Butter Pudding *The Propeller* 12 December 1924 p.7

⁹ Bread And Butter Pudding *Sunday Times* 26 April 1931 p.14

¹⁰ Bread and Butter Pudding, *Green And Gold Cookery Book* 1960 p.90 Weldon Publishing

¹¹ Bread And Butter Pudding *The Propeller* 19 October 1923 p.4

Custard was the binding agent.

Bread and Butter Pudding¹²

Bread, butter, 1 tablespoon sugar, 2 eggs, 1 pint milk, 2 oz. seeded raisins or sultanas, grated nutmeg, little candied peel.

Grease pie dish; cut bread in thin slices and spread butter on, place in pie dish in layers, sprinkle each layer with a few sultanas, cut up candied peel, sugar and nutmeg. Beat eggs, add milk, pour all over bread and butter in, pie dish. Place pie dish in tin of cold water and cook in hot oven till custard is set about 25 minutes, (The water in tin prevents the eggs curdling.)

An unusual recipe using desiccated coconut

Butter and Bread Pudding¹³

Butter a mould or pie dish, and sprinkle it with desiccated cocoanut and grated lemon rind. Then half-fill the dish with pieces of bread and butter. Sprinkle with more cocoanut, add more bread and butter, and pour over the whole a thin custard made with one well-beaten egg and milk or custard powder. Bake in a gentle oven 30 or 40 minutes, and serve with more custard.

Another unusual recipe this time using peanut butter.

Peanut Bread and Butter Pudding¹⁴

Spread two slices of bread on one side with butter, on the other with peanut butter. Cut them in uneven triangular cubes and arrange in a greased glass ovenware dish. Beat 2 eggs with 1 cup brown sugar, & teaspoon vanilla, pinch salt and 1 ½ cups milk. Sprinkle bread and butter in dish with seeded raisins and pour custard carefully over it. Sprinkle with grated nutmeg and brown sugar. Dot with butter. Allow to stand for 1 hour before setting in a pan of hot water in a moderate oven. Cook carefully till set (about 1 hour).

Bread and Butter with fruit

Bread and Butter Glorified¹⁵

Ingredients : Bread, butter, two eggs, one pint of milk, sugar, three apples, vanilla essence, sultanas. Cut the bread into very thin slices and butter both sides of each. Arrange a few slices in a pie-dish, sprinkle with washed and dried sultanas, cover with a thin layer of Peeled and sliced apples, and continue with the layers until the dish is full enough, making the top layer one of buttered bread. Boil the milk. Beat up the eggs, add sugar to taste and vanilla essence, and very slowly pour in the boiling milk, stirring all the time. Pour this custard over the contents of the pie-dish, and bake in a moderate oven for three-quarters of an hour. The top should be rich brown.

Brand Promotion

Bread and Butter Pudding¹⁶

Two or three slices buttered toast, 2 eggs; 2 tablespoons sugar, 6 teaspoons Trufood Powdered Milk, 1 pint water, a few currants or sultanas, 3 drops flavouring essence. Place slice of bread in bottom of pie dish, sprinkle over few currants, then another slice bread. Beat eggs with sugar: have ready the Powdered Milk, smoothly mixed with water, add beaten eggs; pour slowly over bread and bake in a slow oven till set.

¹² Bread and Butter Pudding *Rutherglen Sun and Chiltern Valley Advertiser* 21 August 1931 p.6

¹³ Butter and Bread Pudding *The Narrogin Observer* 24 May 1924 p.7

¹⁴ Peanut Bread and Butter Pudding *The Land* 2 May 1947 p.22

¹⁵ Bread and Butter Glorified *Port Lincoln Times* 2 September 1932 p.8

¹⁶ Bread and Butter Pudding *The Land* 26 April 1928 p.18

Culinary hint

A Bread-and-Butter Pudding¹⁷

If you are making a bread-and-butter pudding add a little ground rice to the milk before pouring it over. It's much more tasty. The kiddies love it.

End comment

I think Bread and Butter Pudding ought to be seen as an Australian classic. It's got the years and presence at the Australian table to be so.

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¹⁷ A Bread-and-Butter Pudding Household Hints *Voice* 23 May 1935 p.4