

### Australian Damper Bread

This is traditional bread baked in the coals of an open fire or in a Dutch Oven (huge lidded cast iron pot) but nowadays we bake it in a normal oven. Of course there are as many variations as there are days in the years but the basic recipe is as follow:-

**Ingredients** 4 cups self-raising flour 3/4 - 1 teaspoon salt 2 teaspoons sugar 2 tablespoons butter at room temperature 1 cup milk 1/2 cup water **Method** Sift the flour and salt into a bowl and mix in the sugar. Rub in the butter with your (clean) hands until a fine breadcrumb texture is achieved. For a well in the top of the flour, pour in the milk and water, and mix well with a knife until the dough come clean from the sides of the bowl. Turn out onto a floured board and knead until smooth and silky, like a baby's bottom. Shape into a mounded loaf, (some people cut a deep cross in the top) and bake in a preheated oven, 200 c / 400 F, for 25 minutes. Then lower the temperature to 180 c / 375 f and cook a further 10 - 15 minutes until done. The loaf should be a light golden brown colour and sound hollow when tapped. If you are "game" try cooking it on a camp fire; nothing beats that extra smoky flavour, especially using Australian Eucalyptus wood to give it that special something. If you are cooking in an oven at home, try putting a few Gum Leaves in the over to smoke as your are cooking the bread. Damper is very similar to Irish Soda Bread, and probably developed from recipes brought over by Irish immigrants/convicts. Variations of the basic recipe are seemingly endless, but you could try substituting other liquids, such as beer for a darker colour/flavour, or varying the ratio of milk to water, and so on. Try adding more sugar and butter and some dried fruits for a dessert damper. Basically use your imagination. If you are cooking on an open fire you could try wrapping the dough in aluminum foil before you place it in the coals, or even try wrapping the around a stick and cooking suspended over the flames. Good Baking!