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## Shrewsbury Cakes

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Alyssa L Connell

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## Shrewsbury Cakes

### Abstract

Post on the authors' use of 18th century recipe books to recreate historic dishes.

### Keywords

Cooking, Recipes

### Disciplines

Dietetics and Clinical Nutrition | History | Library and Information Science

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# Unique at penn

Nothing can more effectually contribute to the Cultivation & Improvement of a Country, the Wisdom, Riches, & Strength, Virtue and Piety, the Welfare & Happiness of a People, than a proper Education of Youth, by forming their Manners, imbuing

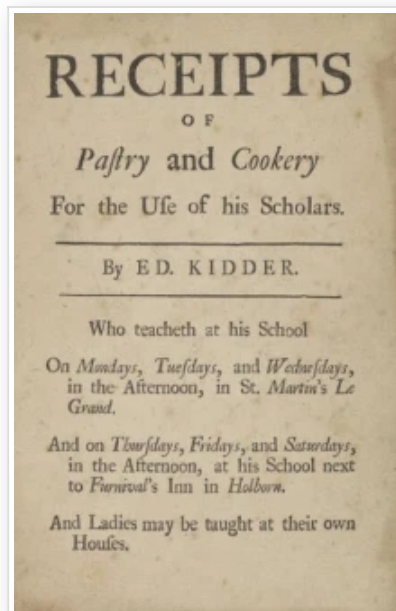
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Tuesday  
SEP 2014

## Shrewsbury Cakes

POSTED BY MARISSA NICOSIA IN UNCATEGORIZED

≈ 2 COMMENTS

[Ed. Note: *Today's post is part of Alyssa Connell and Marissa Nicosia's "Cooking in the Archives" project, which launched in June 2014 with support from a UPenn GAPSA-Provost Fellowship for Interdisciplinary Innovation. Alyssa and Marissa are transcribing, adapting, and cooking recipes from Penn's collection of manuscript recipe books. [Visit their site](#) to learn more about their project.*]



One of the things we've been struck by along the way in this stroll through the culinary archives has been the similarity of certain recipes to many that we follow today. This holds true particularly for baked goods. (Except the notorious **fish custard**.) We weren't quite sure what to expect from these "Shrewsbury cakes" – small cakes? Pancakes? Drop cookies? It turns out that Shrewsbury cakes are basically early modern snickerdoodles.

### ✦ WELCOME

Welcome to Unique at Penn, part of the family of University of Pennsylvania Libraries blogs. Every week this space will feature descriptions and contextualization of items from the collections of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. The site focuses on those materials held by Penn which are in some sense "unique" – drawn from both our special and circulating collections, whether a one-of-a-kind medieval manuscript or a twentieth-century popular novel with generations of student notes penciled inside. See the About page for more on the blog and to contact the editor.

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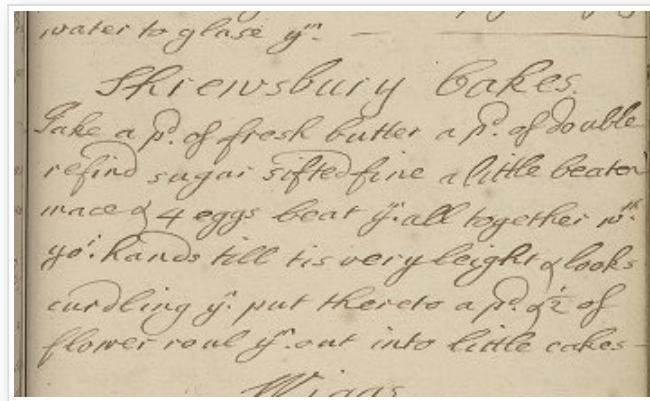
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— [UPenn Ms. Codex 625](#). Printed title page.

This recipe comes from [UPenn MS Codex 625](#), a manuscript recipe book that belonged to a student in a London cooking school in the early eighteenth century. The

pastry school was owned by Edward Kidder, who taught at a few locations in London between around 1720 and 1734. Codex 625 is particularly interesting as it was apparently sold as a blank book with a printed title page for use by students to write down recipes they learned. Kidder also published his recipes in a separate printed volume, [Receipts for Pastry and Cookery](#), in 1720.

### The Recipe



#### Shrewsbury Cakes.

Take a *pound* of fresh butter a *pound* of double refine sugar sifted fine a little beaten mace & 4 eggs beat them all together *with your hands* till tis very leight & looks curdling you put thereto a *pound* & 1/2 of flower roul them out into little cakes

#### Our recipe (halved from the original)

1/2 lb. (2 sticks) butter, softened  
1/2 lb. sugar

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1/4 tsp. mace  
1/2 tsp. cinnamon  
2 eggs  
3/4 lb. flour

Using an electric mixer, cream together the butter and sugar. Then add the eggs and mix at medium speed until the mixture looks curdled. Sift together dry ingredients and add at low speed until just combined. Scoop and roll the dough by hand into 1-tbsp. balls, then pat flat. [You could also refrigerate the dough until it's firm enough to roll out on a flat surface and cut out into rounds.]

Bake at 350F for 15-18 minutes (ours were about 1/3" thick, so you could roll them thinner and have a slightly shorter cooking time) They're done once they turn the slightest bit brown around the edges. This halved recipe yielded about two dozen cookies.

### The Results

If you like snickerdoodles (and who doesn't?), you'd like these. We added the cinnamon because we like it and couldn't resist, and we thought it rounded out the mace nicely. These are mild, fairly soft cookies that are great with tea. We rolled and patted the dough into individual cookies because it was too soft and stick to roll out, but a little bit more flour and a stint in the fridge might make the dough easier to work with a rolling pin.



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#### About Marissa Nicosia

Marissa Nicosia is a UPenn English alumna and an Assistant Professor of Renaissance Literature at Pennsylvania State University's Abington College where she teaches, researches, and writes about early modern English literature, book history, and political theory. Marissa is insatiably curious about weird pamphlets, recipe manuscripts, and other rare books.

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JoAnne Dubil *said:*

October 13, 2014 at 3:32 pm

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Dear Marisa,

I'm going to bake these Shrewsbury Cakes as soon as I can. To think that people liked snickerdoodles in the 1700's! I guess good things never change.

Best,  
JoAnne

**REPLY**

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**Marissa Nicosia *said:***

October 13, 2014 at 5:24 pm

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That's wonderful, JoAnne! Let us know how they turn out.

**REPLY**

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**LEAVE A REPLY**

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