

# Storied Desserts

By Dan Gill

## Molasses Gingerbread

My grandmother, affectionately called Mungee (pronounced with a hard “G”), was raised way out in the country near Chester. She was the prim, proper and fastidious product of finishing school and old Virginia society. In her day, proper young ladies wore high lace and could traverse rough terrain with large books balanced deftly on their heads to improve posture. She was meticulous and frugal: She had balls of string saved from feed bags and a drawer full of used plastic bags, many with *Nolde’s Bread* printed on them. She loved to cook and had boxes and diaries full of recipes that she clipped from newspapers and magazines, many with annotations and comments.

Mungee was not only a good cook; she was an artist with desserts and could work wonders with her kerosene cook-stove. When I was in school at Urbanna Elementary, she lived in the old Jockey Quarters on the farm - also the end of the line for the school bus. Every afternoon, when I got off of the bus, Mungee would have some special treat ready for me. My favorite was her molasses gingerbread hot from the oven and slathered with butter or lemon hard sauce. I have her original recipe, adapted for modern ingredients, and we make it regularly at the store.

### Molasses Gingerbread

1 1/2	cups	sugar
1	cup	butter
1 1/2	cups	molasses
4	each	eggs
1	cup	buttermilk
3	cups	all-purpose flour
1	tsp	salt
2	tsp	soda
2	tsp	ginger - ground
2	tsp	cloves - ground
2	tsp	cinnamon - ground
2	tsp	allspice - ground
1	cup	hot water



Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs, molasses and buttermilk and mix well. Slowly add dry ingredients and blend. Stir in hot water. Pour into greased and floured pan. Bake at 350°F about thirty minutes until it tests done in the center with a toothpick.

## Lemon hard sauce

1 cup softened butter  
3 cups confectioners sugar  
1 ½ tsp vanilla extract  
3 Tbsp lemon juice

Cream butter, add sugar gradually, then vanilla, drop-by-drop, and slowly mix in lemon juice.



Mungee's green enameled *New Perfection* kerosene cook-stove with three burners and an oven. She bought it shortly after she was married, about 1910, and cooked on it for over fifty years. Crude by today's standards, kerosene offered a great improvement over the old wood cook stove prevalent at the time: it was instant, controllable, reliable and relatively clean.

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