

## GRANDMA BARAGAR 'S OATCAKES



This family recipe dates back from around 1870, when Emily Baragar learned to make them as a young girl growing up near Stirling, Hasting County, Ontario.

Our family's oatcakes are of Scottish origin. Scottish soldiers carried a metal plate and a sack of oatmeal. They would heat up the plate over a fire, wet some oats and make a cake to eat. This is said to be the reason why the Scots were able to march such a long ways. Oatcakes were traditionally eaten with every meal, but from the 19th century on, were eaten either with a meal or as a dessert.

Grandma Baragar was my great-great-grandmother, and she and Grandpa Baragar moved to Manitoba shortly after my great-grandfather, Fred Baragar, was born around 1891. They bought a farm in Elm Creek and Grandpa Baragar was a very good farmer. In fact, he was one of the first farmers in Western Canada to grow new types of grain. Grandpa Baragar felt that the only life worth living for a man was to farm, so he bought a farm for each of his five sons. He was disappointed that three of his sons didn't farm – one became a pilot, one became a doctor, and my great-grandfather became a much beloved teacher and principal. His other two sons farmed and his only daughter married a farmer, so that's not too bad, I think !



Grandma Baragar was quite a character. She used to wear three aprons, one over the other, every day. The first apron was made of sacking for feeding the hens and working in the garden. She took this apron off when she was cooking in the kitchen, uncovering the sturdy cotton apron underneath it. This cotton apron was the one she wore when mixing and rolling out these cookies on the wooden kitchen table. If, however, company would drop by unexpectedly for a visit, she would

quickly whip off the cotton apron and reveal a fancy lace apron that saw the light of day only for special occasions.

My grandfather, Fletcher, and his sister, Peggy, still remember going out to stay at the farm when they were growing up, and having Grandma Baragar's warm oatcakes for lunch. My Auntie Peggy tells of how she would sleep with Grandma Baragar in her feather bed out at the farm, and how she learned how to make this recipe during those summers at Elm Creek. Auntie Peggy says that her sons and grandsons like this recipe best out of all her cookie recipes, and she still makes it for them every summer when they come out to visit.

My mother learned this recipe from my Grandpa's mother, Dee Dee, when she was about my age. My mother remembers baking cookies with Dee Dee at the cottage at the lake in the summer. My great-grandfather had built DeeDee a special baking table exactly the right height for rolling out pastry and cookies. What a wise man! Now my mother bakes these cookies for special occasions for my grandparents, like their birthdays, wedding anniversary, etc., but with a variation - she puts a soft date filling between two of the cookies, like a sandwich.

I am the fifth generation of our family to enjoy Grandma Baragar's Oatcake recipe, and now it is my turn to learn how to make them. But whether I bake them with date filling, just plain with sugar, or with my own twist, this special recipe will continue to be an important part of our family history.

Fletcher Bryce Davis (Baragar)  
Grade 6 Willingdon School



### Grandma Baragar's Oatcakes

2 ½ c. Flour

2 ½ c. Oatmeal

1 c. Sugar (or 1 ½ c. if you like it sweeter)

2/3 c. Butter (or Lard, or use Drippings and abit of Bacon Fat – but not too much, just enough for flavour, )

½ tsp. Baking Soda dissolved in ½ c. buttermilk (or sour milk, or hot water)

Mix by hand until well blended.

Roll out and cut into strips, circles, squares or triangles. (Grandma Baragar always cut them into oblong fingers.)

Sprinkle with sugar before baking in a quick oven, 400F, for about 10 minutes.

Keep an eye on them and take out when the edges start to brown.

Lovely served warm. So why not put the kettle on and enjoy !



### Optional Date Filling

Boil 1 c. of pitted dates in a ¼ c. of water with 2 tbsp. lemon juice and 1/3 cup brown sugar until soft.