

What Is A Pasty?

(and how not to pronounce Worcestershire Sauce)

By Dave Larkin

Like most Air Force Navigators and Radio Officers, I frequently had to drive out West to take courses in Winnipeg. On the way as I passed north of Lake Michigan, I observed a strange phenomenon. The familiar hamburger stands started to disappear and be replaced by stands selling 'Pasties'. Eventually curiosity got the better of me and I just had to stop and buy one. To astonishment I was served a real genuine Cornish Pasty (aka Tiddie Hoggis if you live in Devon). And they sell them in corner stores and supermarkets. How did this happen? Well it turns out that many of the local mines were worked by immigrants from Cornwall, and Cornish Pasties are how they take their lunch. It is usually a turnover filled with beef, potatoes and onions, maybe carrots, but they also made two-course pasties, which had one end filled with fruit!

The miner's wife would bake it for him and put his initials on one end so it didn't get lost. The pastry had to be robust to stand up to the rigours of mining - some claimed that it was only good enough if you could drop the pasty down the mine shaft and retrieve it intact. No fancy flaky pastry here. Here's the recipe:

6 oz finely chopped tender steak
1 onion, peeled and finely chopped
1 small carrot, finely chopped
4 oz peeled potato, very finely chopped.
salt and pepper

8 oz of your favourite shortcrust pastry (omit any sugar)

Beaten egg or milk to glaze

Optional: a little beef stock, Worcestershire Sauce, Kitchen Bouquet - heresy but good.

1. Combine the meat, onion, carrot, potato and the seasonings. The result should be moist, use a little stock if need be.
2. Roll out the pastry and cut into four 7 inch rounds.
3. Divide the filling into four and place one portion in the centre of each round.
4. Damp the edges of the pasty and bring together at the top. Press firmly together and crimp.

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5. Place the pasties on a lightly greased baking sheet or on no-stick foil. Glaze with beaten egg or milk.
6. Bake in a 425°F oven for about 30 minutes or until golden brown. Serve hot, warm or cold.

Now for Worcestershire Sauce. I delight in watching American cooks trying to say War-sess-ter-shire Sauce. Sometimes I think the English only spell it Worcestershire to provide aggravation to North Americans. In the time I spent in the UK I never heard it called other than Woostershire Sauce, or, colloquially, just Wooster sauce. Think of the time and trauma that nugget of information is going to save you! Not to mention the wear and tear on your tonsils.

After the Cornish miners were well established in the Mid-West, they were joined by Finnish miners. As a result you will hear those of Finnish descent saying that the pasty is an old Finnish delicacy! However it makes an excellent meal - just at home on the dinner table as in the lunch box. My grandson, Connor, likes to take one to school for his lunch. Supposedly a true Cornish Pasty can only be made by a Cornishwoman, but you can prove that wrong.

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