

Prepare To Become A Liter-Maid

By EMORY DANIELS

The popular chocolate cupcake is destined to become a quarter-liter cake, possibly within the next five years.

At least, it is expected that within five years the housewife cook will be measuring out recipes in metric quantities instead of the traditional British measurements of cups, teaspoons, ounces, etc.

The cupcake, whoops quarter-liter cake, will still taste the same and contain the identical volume. A recipe for a dozen cupcakes, converted to a metric quarter-liter recipe, will still produce a dozen cakes.

The difference is an academic one of measuring in grams, liters, centigrades, and meters.

IT WAS during a personal bout with insomnia that the question first arose: What will happen in the kitchen once we convert to the metric system? A lot of questions came to mind.

What would you buy at the supermarket instead of 10 pounds of flour, a quart of milk, or a pound of butter? Would the packages of each product contain a different volume? Would it cost more?

Would a traditional recipe produce a bigger pie if metric measurements are used? Which is exactly why an appointment was made with Professor Lucy Merritt, a chemistry professor in the science department at Lawrence Institute of Technology in Southfield.

MRS. MERRITT turned out to be a perfect resource person because she was born and raised in Austria where she learned to cook with metric measurements.

In the Austrian kitchen, the cookbook expresses measurements in liters and the kitchen scales weighs in grams. After coming to America, Mrs. Merritt had to learn about cups, teaspoons, tablespoons and ounces.

In her Bloomfield kitchen, she uses traditional measurements because that is how her daughters are being taught to cook in high school home economics. But, she anticipates without the slightest fear the conversion in the United States to metric units.

Fudge Cupcakes

- (TRADITIONAL)
- 2/3 c. brown sugar
 - 1/3 c. milk
 - 2 one-oz. squares unsweetened chocolate
 - 2/3 c. brown sugar
 - 1/3 c. shortening
 - 1 t. vanilla
 - 2 eggs
 - 1 1/3 c. sifted all-purpose flour
 - 1 t. soda
 - 1/2 t. salt
 - 1/2 c. milk

Combine brown sugar, milk and chocolate in saucepan. Stir over very low heat until chocolate melts; cool. Gradually add brown sugar to shortening, creaming until sugar is dissolved. Add vanilla and eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. Sift together flour, soda, and salt. Add to creamed mixture alternately with 1/2 cup milk, beating after each addition. Stir in chocolate mixture. Fill paper baking cups in muffin pans half full. Bake in moderate oven (375) about 20 minutes. Makes about two dozen cupcakes.

- (IN THE FUTURE)
- 160 milliliters brown sugar
 - 80 milliliters milk
 - 55 grams unsweetened chocolate
 - 160 milliliters brown sugar
 - 80 milliliters shortening
 - 5 milliliters vanilla
 - 2 eggs
 - 315 milliliters sifted all-purpose flour
 - 5 milliliters soda
 - 2.5 milliliters salt
 - 120 milliliters milk

Combine 160 milliliters brown sugar, 80 milliliters milk and chocolate in saucepan. Stir over very low heat until chocolate melts; cool. Gradually add 160 milliliters brown sugar to shortening, creaming until sugar is dissolved. Add vanilla and eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. Sift together flour, soda, and salt. Add to creamed mixture alternately with 120 milliliters milk, beating after each addition.

"Cooking has never been an exact science. The best cooks seldom follow a recipe to the tee. Cooking will become more exact by going to weights, but there will be little difference in the prepared food."

"This is just a numbers game. We change the label of one pound to 454 grams and re-name temperatures on the oven scale from 375 degrees Fahrenheit to 190.5 centigrade. But, 454 grams will feel as heavy as one pound, and 190.5 centigrade is just as hot as 375 degrees F."

FOR ILLUSTRATION, Mrs. Merritt was given a recipe for Fudge Cakes from Better Homes and Gardens New Cook Book (Meredith Press, 1968).

She was asked to convert it into a metric recipe, and tell her the housewife would be affected by the change while mixing and cooking the batter.

The two-thirds cup brown sugar became 157.3 milliliters, one-third cup milk became 78.86 milliliters, one teaspoon vanilla, 4.92 milliliters, etc. (see recipe on this page).

She believes that, when conversion comes, these measurements will be rounded off to make reading easier for laymen. Because the difference is infinitesimal, by rounding off, there wouldn't be any practical effect in doing so.

Thus, the recipe would become: 160 milliliters of brown sugar; 80 milliliters milk, 60 grams unsweetened chocolate, 160 milliliters brown sugar, 80 milliliters shortening, 5 milliliters vanilla, 315 milliliters flour, five milliliters soda, 3 milliliters salt, and 120 milliliters milk. Two eggs, of course, would still be two eggs.

Actually, the squares of chocolate would also be unaffected by the conversion. Chocolate comes in one-ounce squares and is measured in squares. And a square will always be a square. Won't it?

THE HOUSEWIFE, at some point, would have to buy different measuring utensils labeled with metric equivalents. The oven temperature would also have to be changed.

The new dial on the oven would record heat in centigrades. The freezing point is 32 degrees F, and 0 degrees Celsius.



EDITOR EMORY DANIELS works both sides of a slide rule to transpose inches into centimeters and wonders if American children will one day ask, "Mommy, can I have a quarter-liter cake?" (Observer photo by Harry Mauthe)



PROF. LUCY MERRITT works with a vial to demonstrate that liquids are a silly gram heavier than the same dry measurement; in a numbers game Americans will be playing within the next five years. (Observer photo by Bob Woodring)

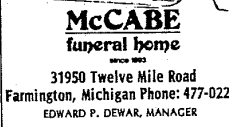
Centigrade. The boiling point is 212 degrees F and 100 degrees C. Room temperature is 20 centigrades.

The body temperature is 98 degrees F and 36.67 degrees centigrade. Using centigrades, the mother reading a thermometer would discover her infant had a fever if it read between 37.78 and 40 degrees centigrade.

The metric oven dial would read: rounded off) 150, 175, 190, 205, 220, and 235 degrees centigrades. The meat thermometer would also be relabeled to show centigrade heat intensity.

If you want to immediately convert your oven dial, meat thermometer and thermostat, the formula is one degree Fahrenheit equals 1.8 degrees centigrade. But, it would be easier to wait until the year of conversion comes closer and manufacturers begin marketing hardware with centigrades.

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