

An Anarchist's Cookbook

a blog about food & lifestyles outside 'consumer society'

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Available free on-line at:
<http://www.fraw.org.uk/aac/>

For the video accompanying this post, go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJTwrHjv-mQ>

This second blog post returns again to the pestle & mortar, this time applying a lot more effort to produce finer-grained meal like flour; with which I'll make a scone-like recipe using oil and raising agents.

This concoction is basically what it says it is: '[Lembas](#)' – a label taken from [Tolkein's great tome](#) to describe a snack created mainly for 'wayfaring', backpacking and cycle touring; and '[scone](#)' – a traditional recipe for a leavened cake which I used to create it.

These days I regularly make *lembas scones* to take day-walking, or to keep me going on my travels around Britain, or working at festivals. Like the 'waybread' described in the Tolkein's books, they're a lightweight, nutrient rich snack, that keep for many days without spoiling, and keeps you feeling 'well fed' when travelling under your own power.

In this blog post I outline how I make them, and how to assess how 'good' they are for you. I'll also describe a little about using raising agents in baking, and a bit about nutrition for exercise.

When I say that they're "my ideal snack", that's because, by trial and error, I found a combination of ingredients that suits me when doing heavy work.

As I always stress in this blog, everyone, for a whole variety of biological and medical reasons, is different. I encourage you to try my approach, but, in true anarchist-sharing-style, vary the ingredients to create something that suits you.

Part 2: '*Lembas Scones; my ideal (vegan) wayfaring snack*'

One of the reasons I got into nutrition in my teens was that I did a lot of endurance exercise – long distance cross-country walking, backpacking, and cycle touring. I didn't "go vegan" as such; I just realised that eating really cheaply, having light-weight food for travel, and packing a whole lot of nutrition in a small space, made vegan wholefoods far preferable to the canned or dried rubbish generally on offer to campers in the 1980s.

Back then I (unwittingly) evolved a simple snack that packed a balance of protein, fats, and carbohydrates that kept me going: "*Lembas Scones*".

You may not like my combination of nuts and flour, or you might want a different flavour... *please do try and improvise!*

A slow-burn food for hard exercise

Lembas scones are not a snack to 'live on'; they're something to aid hard physical work or exercise. They sustain you just for when you exercise, but are not a substitute for a good diet before or after that.

Muscles burn simple sugars. They keep a small reserve of sugar in a compound called glycogen, but need to be supplied with sugars from the blood to keep working intensely.

The body has three ways of making blood sugar: Digesting food; using the big store of glycogen in the liver to release energy quickly; and burning the triglycerides (fat) stored in fatty tissues to release energy slowly over a longer period (which is why fat is easy for your body to create, but harder to burn).

This is where the hormone insulin is important. It regulates how your body digests food to keep it working, or store the excess of calories as glycogen or fats when not needed immediately. Eating the wrong balance of food sends the wrong signals to the hormone system, which is what wrecks your insulin balance and can lead to type-2 diabetes. That's why exercise, which encourages that balance to become more stable and responsive, decreases the risk of getting diabetes.

When taking exercise drinking lots of energy drinks, or eating sugary foods, certainly supplies a quick burst of energy to your muscles.

It also makes you thirsty, as your body needs water to metabolise those sugars quickly; and it stresses your insulin level because it has to manage the surge of sugar, which your muscles can't use all at once.

Many of the products advertised as snack, energy, or protein bars to aid exercise are not ideal, as they don't seek to manage that balance over time – they just provide a quick fix of energy to make you feel better. That refreshing 'buzz' of energy, especially when combined with [stimulants like caffeine](#), is also what makes them addictive.

To keep a sustained energy level without stressing your insulin balance requires: ['Complex carbohydrates'](#) – a simple label for what is a complicated group of compounds that work in different ways; and proteins, fats, and minerals – that are slowly digested ready to 'feed' your body when you finish your activity and relax to repair the damage done.

The [sugary parts](#) of food (monosaccharides and disaccharides) are released in the stomach and upper intestine to provide a quick energy surge; [the starches](#) (polysaccharides) are digested in your intestine, to provide a steady supply of sugars over a longer period;

Other beneficial compounds, proteins, and fats, are broken down by gut bacteria to release many more nutrients apart from just the sugar – a process that can take many hours.

This process can be improved by eating a good amount of [dietary fibre](#). *Lembas scones* contain a good quantity of fibre. That's beneficial to digestion, but fibre also has a role in making you feel 'full' – which for exercise is important because you want to feel well fed, but not actually be well-fed and bloated as it is difficult to move.

I created the recipe for *lembas scones* in



part by combining ingredients that did all of the above; *but more importantly, by trial and error*. For example, there's not a lot of sugar in the scones because – counter-intuitively – I found less sugar made me feel better over the course of the day. Working with your body, and 'listening' to how it responds to tweaks in the recipe, is really important.

Finally, *lembas scones* are a slow release energy food. So what about when I need a big push? Don't you need those high sugar 'energy snacks' then?

Of all the things I've tried to get a quick rush of energy, the greatest benefit I've found when backpacking are apples. The sugar in apples is mostly fructose, which your muscles can burn immediately. The saturated, wet flesh also provides a refreshing drink to go with those sugars. Apples contain a lot of dietary fibre to regulate sugar uptake too. More importantly, there's no waste wrapper to dispose of – just throw the core in a hedge and it will easily compost, assuming no small creatures eat your leftovers first.

Making the scones

In part 1 I used a pestle & mortar to create a coarse nut meal, bound together by mushy chickpeas, to make a nut burger.

The approach here is more intense – bash the nuts, seeds, and whatever else you use into a finer meal. It makes a better quality scone, but also aids the faster digestion of the ingredients to keep your muscles fed.

As stated previously I do not measure – and so the measurements here have been taken by approximating the amounts I throw into the mix. Likewise the ingredients are what I had to hand; and both the types of flour used, the nuts or seeds used as the filler, the amount of sugar, or the flavouring used, can be varied to suit your tastes. *The method is the same irrespective of the ingredients used.*

Put the mixed fruit and oats in a bowl to soak in some hot, but not boiling water. Unlike the other, more oily ingredients, oats and mixed fruit will rob moisture from the mix as it cooks. Pre-soaking makes them far more lush and tasty.

Today I'm using hazelnuts. You can use them raw, but hazelnuts are one

of those nuts that improve when roasted. I put them on a tray in an oven preheated to gas mark 4/176°C/350°F for 5-10 minutes – until they start smelling like lovely baked bread.

Next, get some exercise with the pestle and mortar. The nuts and seeds need to be pounded to a fine meal – so that nothing is bigger than a mustard seed or a grain of rice. That not only makes the scone more uniform in texture, it also aids the leavening process.

Now mix the wheat flour, the raising agents, the besan flour, and the sugar, in a large bowl. Take the time to sift both the raising agents and the besan flour through your fingers as they often contain lumps – and crush any lumps you find (or use a coarse sieve if you want to add to the washing-up).

I grate some nutmeg into the flour to add flavour. You might want to omit this; or add more sugar; or dissolve a little treacle or molasses in warm water and use that to mix the dough; or omit the mixed fruit (though I use it because it's a good source of unrefined sugars and minerals). How you flavour the scones – or not – is up to you.

Next, add the oil and mix. First roughly mix with fingers until the oil has disappeared; then thoroughly blend the flour and oil between your palms to create a very fine crumb-like mass. You could use solid fat (or butter) as in the traditional recipe, but I find oil so much easier to the traditional use of harder fats.

It's important to get through the next stage really quickly. That's because the moment you add water the raising agents start to work – and there's no point using them if kneading and rolling just batters the gas bubbles out of the dough by taking too long.

Begin by putting the oven on gas mark 5/190°C/375°F. Greasing and flouring the oven tray first, and put the oven on to pre-heat, means time isn't wasted later when the raising agents have started to do their work.

Next, grease a baking tray. Put a little flour on the top and shake to make it stick all over the surface – which helps to create a non-stick coating without using [toxic chemicals](#).

Now mix the pestle & mortared nuts into the bowl. Then drain any excess water from the oats and mixed fruit and add that too. Then mix everything together.

What happens when you roughly mix is that

Flour and raising agents

To make pastry rise and become spongy it needs '[leavening](#)'. Before a century ago that was mainly done with fermentation. Then chemicals were created in bulk which could be used instead of yeast to leaven the mix, and do so more quickly.

Most raising agents use an acid and an alkali chemical which react to make small bubbles of carbon dioxide – which expand to raise the dough.

The commonest raising agent, [baking powder](#), is usually a mixture of [sodium bicarbonate](#) (or '[baking soda](#)') and some form of calcium phosphate or [pyrophosphate](#). Problem is that if you put those in a container together they will react before use. For that reason the chemicals are diluted in a larger volume of powder, usually [corn starch](#) (corn flour), to stop them reacting together.

'[Self-raising](#)' flour is ordinary plain flour with raising agents already added. If you have no self-raising flour you can use plain flour and add baking powder to it – usually around 4 teaspoons (18 grams) to each 250 grams/half pound of flour (*or a ratio of 1 part baking powder to 14 plain flour*).

The problem with baking powder is that it isn't very vigorous. With scones you need something that's really reactive. I add sodium bicarbonate and '[Cream of Tartar](#)' ([potassium bitartrate](#)). Even when making plain scones using only self raising flour, I always add a little extra raising agent.

As these powders are not diluted with corn starch less is required. To create an equivalent to self-raising flour add one teaspoon of sodium bicarbonate, and two of [Cream of Tartar](#), per 250 grams/half pound of flour (*a ratio of 1 part bicarb, to 2 parts cream of tartar, to 80 plain flour*).

In this recipe I used brown self-raising flour because that's what I had in the kitchen. I could have used only self-raising flour, with about a fifth of the bicarb/tartar; or I could have used only plain wholemeal flour, and added twice the amount. All adding the raising agents does is make the plain flour and the fine nut meal into the equivalent of self-raising flour – which makes the scones rise.

The important thing to note is that the moment you add water to the mix, those chemicals start to react – *and make gas bubbles*. You must knead your mix, roll it out, cut the scones, and then get them on a tray and into the oven as quickly as possible to get the best effect from the raising agents.

How much raising agent you use in your baking is a matter of trial, error, *and thus experience*.

Wholemeal flour needs a little more than white flour; if the mix is quite dry it won't rise as well as if the dough is quite sticky. The best advice I can give is, *keep practising!*



the flour is taking moisture from the oats and mixed fruit (rather than the other way around if they had not been soaked).

When the mix starts to cake into lumps, add more water a little at a time. Carry on until you have a sticky, but not wet dough. If you put too much water in, just add a little more flour to soak it up – *which is what I deliberately do in the video to show how to do this*.

Put the dough on a floured surface and give a little knead to get a more uniform ball. Now you can roll it flat, not less than 12-15 millimetres or half-an-inch thick, then cut circles or other shapes and place them on the tray.

As soon as the tray is full put it in the oven, near to the top, for around 20-25 minutes – turning the tray around after ten or fifteen minutes to make sure they're evenly baked.

When baked to a light brown colour, place the scones on wire trays until they have completely cooled. Then store in an air-tight container to keep the fresh (or freeze).

I make big batches of scones and then put them in the freezer – taking them out a small container-full at a time to use as and when needed. It means I have 'fresh' scones when I want them, which saves time and cost.

Cost and nutrition

The recipe shown here, listed in the table above, makes about two kilos of dough. For smaller batches just divide those figures to get the amount you require.

The scones cost 8p to 12p each, although the cost will vary depending on what ingredients you use and how they are sourced.

Based on these ingredients, the table below shows the nutritional content of the scones. That value is calculated, for each in-

Ingredients:	Weight, g	Price £/kg:	Cost, £
Stoneground wholemeal flour	325	£0.87	£0.28
Brown self-raising flour	325	£0.87	£0.28
Besan flour	125	£1.40	£0.18
Olive oil (volume, ml)	185	£4.50	£0.83
Mixed fruit	150	£2.99	£0.45
Hazelnuts	75	£15.96	£1.20
Walnuts	50	£8.99	£0.45
Pumpkin seeds	50	£6.99	£0.35
Porridge oats	75	£1.49	£0.11
Sunflower seeds	50	£2.99	£0.15
Light muscovado sugar	50	£3.40	£0.17
Sodium bicarbonate (2 tsp)	9.2	£7.00	£0.06
Cream of tartar (4 tsp)	18.4	£10.00	£0.18
1/8 th of a whole nutmeg	0.417	£86.30	£0.04
Total dry ingredients:	1,488		£4.73

Produce:	Price	Number scones	Weight/ scone, g	Scone dry weight, g
Round scones	£0.08	41	34	26
Fingers	£0.12	11	48	37
Total "wet weight":	£0.25 per 100g		1,907	

The ingredients and their cost

redient, by dividing the weight in grams used by 100, and multiplying by the stated value on the supplier's analysis – then adding everything together to get the total.

The table below lists a few other similar snacks chosen at random. *Lembas scones* have a good protein content, but what is significant is the ratio of carbohydrates to sugars – which means the scone provides more 'slow burn' nutrition, compared to the other more sugary shop-bought options.

***Lembas scones* are a cheap and nutritious snack that compare well to 'shop-bought' foods. They are an example of how "do it yourself" is a real, practical alternative to the 'products' society encourages consumers to buy to help people take exercise.**



A comparison of lembas scone price/nutrition with other popular snacks

Comparison:	Price	Weight, g	Price/ 100g	Nutritional content per 100g:						
				Calories, kcal	Protein, g	Carbohydrate, g	Of which sugars, g	Fats, g	Saturated fat, g	Fibre, g
Trek Peanut Power 55g	£1.19	55	£2.16	369	18.5	46.7	38.4	10.9	1.8	3
Eat Natural Protein Packed 45g	£0.99	45	£2.20	496	26	31.3	19.7	28.4	5	2.4
Nakd Peanut Delight 35g	£0.99	35	£2.83	425	13.6	41.7	38.8	21.5	3.9	5
H&B Oaty Flapjack 100g	£0.99	100	£0.99	433	6.8	53.8	21.5	19.8	6.8	6.1
Tracker 5x26g peanut bar	£0.31	26	£1.19	436	8.6	51.3	21.7	18.9	6.2	3.1
Lembas Scone (round, 34g)	£0.08	34	£0.25	343	8.0	38.8	9.2	17.0	2.2	4.2

An Anarchist's Cookbook, Part 2: 'Lembas Scones'

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