

# A 4th of July Family Treat: Johnnycakes

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**T**wo hundred years ago, in post-revolutionary America, the lives of women centered around the infinite details of running a home. Food preparation occupied a large part of their days, in addition to the mending, sewing, spinning, and general upkeep duties. Over a perpetually burning hearth fire, three daily meals were prepared with the assistance of cast iron cookware such as a spider, a frying pan set on three legs.

Colonial cooks took full advantage of the bounty that the new land presented to them, not least of all corn. Most housewives in 19th Century America had a recipe for johnnycakes, whose primary ingredient is corn meal, in their meal preparation repertoire. Some early versions were as basic as cornmeal, salt, hot water, and pan drippings. Johnnycakes are fried thin in butter or oil like pancakes and tend towards the bland, providing a good accompaniment to roasted or smoked meats, sauces, and jams. They were easy to prepare, even when considering the limited household amenities available in those pre-electricity days. These flat little corn cakes could be kept for a period of time without being refrigerated and were easily transportable. This leads many to believe that the name johnnycake is really slang for their original title: journeycake. Johnnycake and roasted meat sandwiches, anyone? Johnnycakes and fried eggs probably warmed the soul on cold winter mornings. And for early American sweet tooths, johnnycakes smothered in preserves or molasses might have hit just the right spot.

This July 4th, in honor of those hardworking colonial homemakers and to commemorate American culinary history, fry up a batch of johnnycakes. In keeping with the bold and innovative American spirit, update and adapt them to modern tastes and times. Put a further patriotic spin on these standards by using blue cornmeal (available at health food stores or at [www.arrowheadmills.com](http://www.arrowheadmills.com)) and serve with whipped cream and strawberries or raspberries, for a sweet and historical red, white, and blue shortcake-type dessert.

If you prefer a savory version of the johnnycake, incorporate some multicultural spice into the melting pot. Plate these blue corn cakes with a dollop of sour cream and a generous ladling of tomato salsa. The johnnycake combinations and additions are limitless and could reflect your family's unique American ingredients.

## *Johnnycakes for a New Generation of American Patriots*

### *Sweet*

2 cups cornmeal  
1½ cups very hot water  
4 tbsp. butter, melted  
1 lightly beaten egg  
½ cup buttermilk  
½ cup honey

Place cornmeal in large bowl, pour very hot water over cornmeal and leave for 2-3 minutes. In the meantime, melt butter. Mix butter, beaten egg, buttermilk, and honey into the cornmeal mush.

Heat 1 tbsp. butter or cooking oil in skillet over med. high heat. Drop large spoonfuls of batter onto hot skillet. Flip over when the edges become firm and golden. Serve hot. Recipe yields approximately 12 johnnycakes.

### *Savory*

2 cups cornmeal  
1½ c. very hot water  
4 tbsp. butter, melted  
1 lightly beaten egg  
1 heaping tbsp. taco spice  
1 cup shredded sharp white cheddar

Pour very hot water over cornmeal in large bowl and leave for 2-3 minutes. In the meantime, melt butter. Mix butter, egg, and taco spice into the cornmeal mush. Stir in shredded cheddar. Drop large spoonfuls of batter onto hot skillet. Flip over when edges become firm and golden. Serve hot. Recipe yields approx. 12 johnnycakes.

