



## History of Shortbread

Shortbread is a classic Scottish dessert that consists of three basic ingredients: flour, sugar, and butter. This dessert resulted from medieval biscuit bread, which was a twice-baked, enriched bread roll dusted with sugar and spices and hardened into a hard, dry, sweetened biscuit called a rusk. Eventually, yeast from the original rusk recipe was replaced by butter, which was becoming more of a staple in the British Isles.

Despite the fact that shortbread was prepared during much of the 12th century, the refinement of shortbread was actually accredited to Mary, Queen of Scots in the 16th century. The name of one of the most famous and most traditional forms of shortbread, petticoat tails, were named by Queen Mary. This type of shortbread was baked, cut into triangular wedges, and flavored with caraway seeds.

Shortbread was expensive and reserved as a luxury for special occasions such as Christmas, Hogmanay (Scottish New Year's Eve), and weddings. In Shetland, it is traditional to break a decorated shortbread cake over the head of a new bride on the entrance of her new house.

Shortbread is traditionally formed into one of three shapes: one large circle, which is divided into segments as soon as it is taken out of the oven (petticoat tails, named from the French petits cotés, a pointed biscuit eaten with wine[2]); individual round biscuits (shortbread rounds); or a thick ( $\frac{3}{4}$ " or 2 cm) oblong slab cut into fingers.

Shortbread is so named because of its crumbly texture (from an old meaning of the word short). The cause of this texture is its high fat content, provided by the butter. The short or crumbly texture is a result of the fact that the fat inhibits the formation of long protein (gluten) strands. The related word "shortening" refers to any fat that may be added to produce a short (crumbly) texture.

Shortbread was classified as a bread by bakers to avoid paying the tax placed on biscuits.

The Scottish custom of eating shortbread on New Year's Eve derives from an ancient pagan ritual of eating Yule Cakes.

***January 6th of each year is National Shortbread Day.***

Shortbread may have been made as early as the 12th Century, however its invention is often attributed to Mary, Queen of Scots in the 16th Century. Petticoat Tails were a traditional form of shortbread said to be enjoyed by the queen. The round shortbread was flavored with caraway seeds, baked and cut into triangular wedges. The triangles resemble the shape of fabric pieces used to make petticoats during the rein of Queen Elizabeth I. Shortbread was also made in individual round biscuits called shortbread rounds and in a rectangular slab, which was cut into thin pieces known as fingers. All of these forms of shortbread are still made today.