

## The Great Yorkshire Pudding Debate

*“Evenings the whole family gathered around the supper table. Meals were plain in the English style and always preceded by servings of Yorkshire pudding.”*

When it came time to critique my story about a Galician girl, set in Manitoba in 1903, the above sentence raised a chorus of objections from fellow members of the CFUW Creative Writing Group. They knew beyond a doubt that Yorkshire pudding is always served with the roast of beef and at no other time. My Yorkshire ancestors left the Dales in the 1870s and ultimately settled in Manitoba after a decade in Southern Ontario. I had assumed they retained customs of the old country.

The matter remained unresolved by the time our meeting wound up so I decided to take the matter to the real authorities, members of the Yorkshire Dales Historical Society. I explained that here in Canada, Yorkshire pudding is served only with roast beef and as part of the main course not as a starter.

The responses poured in:

Mandy wrote:

*Being Lancashire-born with a Scottish father and a Yorkshire grandfather and living in Yorkshire, our household was slightly different to my friends. We had small individual Yorkshire puddings with our Sunday dinner. Whether it was roast beef, pork, lamb or chicken, we always had Yorkshire puddings on Sunday. At a friend's grandparents for Sunday lunch/dinner (main meal), I was surprised to be served up a large Yorkshire pudding with stuffing and gravy as the first course, I stayed quiet and ate it, then breathed a sigh of relief to learn that was only a starter....three courses were never served in our house!*

*Now I run my own home, I still only cook Yorkshire puddings on a Sunday despite my "Southern" husband loving them and prepared to eat them at every meal.*

From MM:

*Susan, lots of others will answer as well but this is the ONLY way: To serve each Yorkshire Pudding, as a first course, with gravy, or in summer, a Yorkshire Salad. When my family comes for Sunday lunch I have to make whole oven-loads of Yorkshire Puddings and Pints of gravy as they compete to see who can eat the most! It really spoils a Yorkshire Pudding to eat it on a plate with other things, vegetables and meat, it is such a Perfect piece of confection, that it can only be truly appreciated when eaten in its splendid glory, alone, as a first course.*

From Dave:

*Served as a starter with onion gravy or as a dessert with Golden Syrup. My wife a "maid of Kent" still talks of her first Sunday lunch, before we married, with my Aunt and Uncle who had moved to Essex. She was presented with a large dinner plate occupied with an equally large Yorkshire. She thought that was lunch.*

From Geoff:

*I knew a restaurant in Harrogate which did a special set meal of*

*Starter: Yorks pud with onion gravy*

*Main: Giant Yorks pud with beef and veg or chicken & veg*

*Dessert: Giant Yorks with either ice cream or trifle*

From RV:

*Coming from a mining family (in Durham, not Yorkshire ) as I do, I can remember that in the 1950 s we always had a large Yorkshire pudding and gravy as the starter. It was a way of filling hungry bellies when my parents could not afford a large piece of beef or other meat for the main course. With a similar batter mix mum would make pancakes on which we would have Lyle's Golden Syrup, but I have never heard of Maple Syrup on Yorkshire Puds.*

Greetings from Ann:

*Definitely Yorkshire pudding with gravy before the roast meat. No matter what the meat. Not individuals but a big pudding made in the roasting tin with crispy, risen edges and soft interior. With mint sauce sometimes. And my grandmother born in Shildon used to make mint sauce with sliced onions and lettuce to have with roast beef (which was never remotely pink, ie always well done). I haven't inherited the knack but one of my daughters makes magnificent Yorkshire Pudding. I imagine eating it first was to staunch the appetites of my labouring ancestors.*

From Ken:

*For those interested in old recipes, the Hairy Bikers programme said that the first Yorkshire pudding in 1747 was produced by hanging a mutton joint in front of the fire and letting the juices drip into the pudding below. It produced a soggy mass.*

From Christine:

*When I was a small child in Darlington in the early 1950s, money was always scarce in our household. I remember my mother, who was an excellent cook, used to make small Yorkshire puddings in bun tins on Sundays. My parents ate theirs with meat, veg and gravy, but my brother and I were always given ours after we'd had our meat and veg, with a sprinkling of sugar and milk. I suppose it made a cheap and filling dessert for us.*

From Joanna:

*When I was little we ate it with the meat, but when I got older my mother went back to her Yorkshire roots and served it before the meal, one big pudding just as Ann describes, crisp round the edges a little soggy in the middle—lovely, and you got more this way. We also used to have it as a pudding cooked with rhubarb or apple served with sugar and cream. Without fail every time we had it my grandmother would say that it was a Midlands dish, called Apple Drop (presumably with Rhubarb it was Rhubarb Drop), It was lovely too and then of course there was Toad in the Hole! Sadly my Yorkshire pudding gene is switched off. I cannot make it for love nor money nor recipe nor oven. However my result does sound very similar to the first Yorkshire pudding described by The Hairy Bikers.*

From RV again:

#### **YORKSHIRE PUDDING RECIPE**

*Essentially the three main ingredients, flour, milk and eggs have to be measured in fairly equal amounts, by volume. So 125 ml, or a cup full of each, a pint, or even larger quantities if you have several hungry guests to feed.*

*( Batter Mix for 12 small puddings )*

*150 ml plain flour (not self raising)*

*150 ml semi-skimmed milk*

*Three medium eggs (about 150 ml)*

*A sprinkle of salt and pepper*

*Sunflower Cooking Oil or similar*

*Mix the ingredients in a blender/processor or hand whisk together in a bowl or jug until all the flour is mixed in and you have a smooth thin batter. Leave to stand for at least 30 minutes and meanwhile preheat the oven to at least 200 degrees Centigrade.*

*Pour no more than a teaspoon full of oil in each of the cups of a non-stick Yorkshire pudding or muffin tray. Place the tray in the oven until the oil is heated well, take out the tray add small quantities of batter mix in each cup and replace in the oven for approximately 20 minutes.*

*On no account should the oven door be opened in the early stages until the puddings are crispy, brown and have risen well. Opening the door will allow the temperature to drop and the puddings to flatten, never to recover.*

*Enjoy, with or without gravy, or maple syrup and if you have too many you can simply freeze them and eat on a later occasion covered in strawberry jam or honey.*

This recipe, RV explained, was adapted from one recently published in his local newspaper. Twenty-first century health consciousness is apparent.

MM replies:

*But, please use dripping, not oil*

*Beat by hand in a jug*

*let it stand the time it takes to go to church*

*beat again when you get back*

From Kit:

*Wonderful to hear these tales etc. about Yorkshire pudding. When I was a boy we always had the puddings (and big they were!) before the main course.*

*The main course did include the lettuce and onion salad that another of your correspondents mentioned. The salad is made the following way:- lettuce is sliced up into thin strips and sliced small onions (scallions) are added to it. Vinegar is added to the dish (not enough to cover the onion and lettuce) and sugar is then sprinkled over. It should be prepared about 2 hours before you expect to eat the main course.*

*The sugar will form a crisp icy-like layer on the lettuce and onion.*

*This salad is truly delicious and the perfect complement to lamb. If you haven't tried it before then try it the next time you have lamb. Your correspondent mentioned having this salad at Shildon. I still make the salad and all my relatives insist that it is an Arkengarthdale delicacy. How true this I don't know.*

From Malise:

*I just wanted to add that my sister nearly married into a family that had to have Yorkshire puds in different pans. Half the family liked it in square tins; the other half had to have it in round tins. I think she was lucky to escape!*

On that note the discussion was brought to an end by the dalesfhs Moderator. My colleagues of the creative writing group feel the whole topic is too good to keep to ourselves. With edits, I am sharing the debate with you the members of CFUW and now I must ask the big question. How will you serve your next Yorkshire pudding?