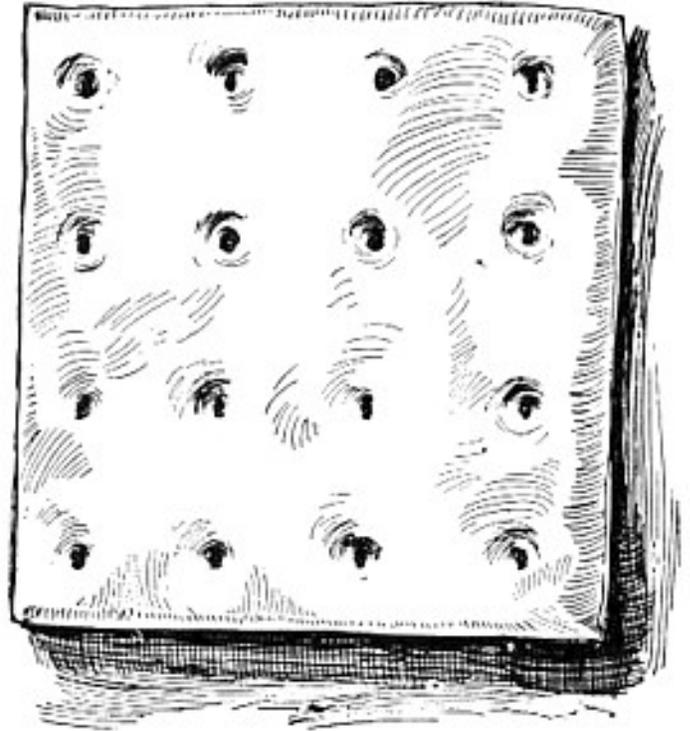


Directions

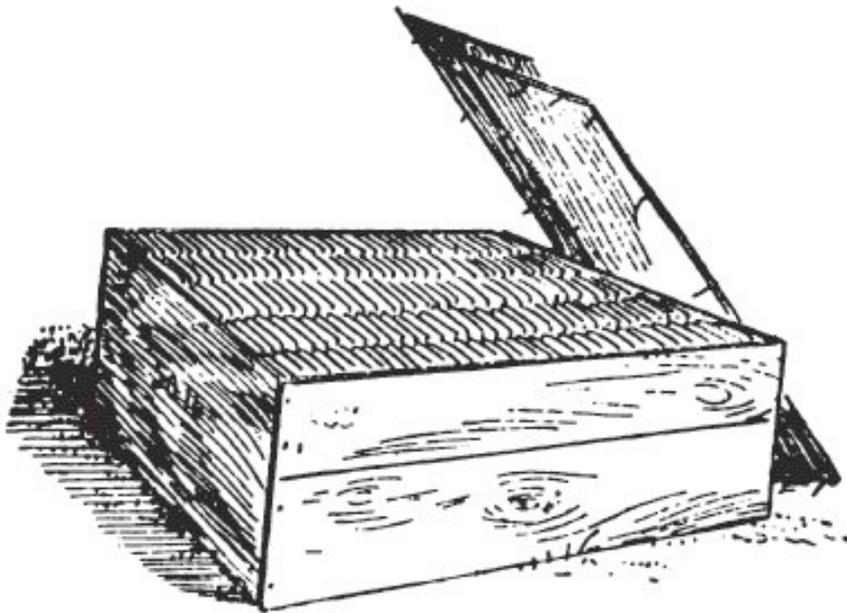
In this assignment, you are asked to follow a recipe and make Civil War hardtack in your home kitchen. Afterwards, you are to submit photos, and a story of your adventures in cooking.

PROJECT ASSIGNMENT: MAKING CIVIL WAR ARMY HARDTACK



PART I: BACKGROUND AND RECIPE:

Hard bread or “hardtack” was an important part of the diet of a Yankee soldier during the Civil War. Along with coffee and salted pork, hardtack was consumed by soldiers day after day, month after month.



A BOX OF HARDTACK.

The U.S. government contracted with commercial bakeries to provide millions of hardtack crackers to its' fighting men. With six-to-ten crackers a day as a standard ration – a company of 50 men could go through a fifty pound box of crackers in one day. It took mountains of hardtack boxes to feed a Union Army of 60,000 to 90,000 men.

Unlike fresh baked bread – the hardtack cracker would not mold or rot and if kept dry could last for years. The key to this longevity is a baking process that removed all the moisture from the bread dough.

Hardtack crackers were notoriously hard on the teeth, but soldiers quickly became used to them and often complained if they couldn't get a steady supply. Hardtack needs no campfire to prepare, and soldiers came to appreciate the convenience of pulling a cracker out of the haversack and gnawing away.

Confederate soldiers were seldom supplied with hard bread and instead commonly received cornmeal, or raw flour for rations which had to be cooked to be edible.

Real hardtack was very uniform and formed in molds. But you can make a passable reproduction with a simple recipe and a little patience:

Ingredients:
4 cups flour
4 teaspoons salt
Water (about 2 cups)
Pre-heat oven to 375 degrees F
Makes about 10 pieces

Mix the flour and salt together in a bowl. Try mixing the flour using just your right hand, so you don't have both hands all "goopy" with wet dough. Add just enough water (less than two cups) to make the mixture stick together. When properly mixed, you will have a dough that will not stick to hands, rolling pin or pan. Roll the dough out and shape it into a rough rectangle. Cut into the dough into squares about 4 X 4 inches and 3/8 inch thick. Try cutting out one piece at a time, and then kneading the remaining dough again and cutting a second piece etc.

After cutting, press into each square a pattern of four rows of four holes using a nail. (Note: just 'press' into the dough, don't punch through it. The appearance is similar to a modern saltine cracker.) Turn each square over and repeat.

Place on an ungreased cookie sheet in the oven and bake for 30 minutes. Turn each piece over and bake for another 30 minutes. NOTE: You may need to cook longer to get cooked through. The crackers should be slightly brown on both sides. If possible, they should very hard and not chewy inside.

PART II: ESSAY: Write a well-composed fourteen-sentence essay on the follow topic: Use your own paper – do not write on this assignment sheet.

ESSAY PROMPT:

Describe your efforts at making and eating your own hardtack. What did you learn about the Civil War from this experience? What advice would you have for anyone else doing this assignment?

PART III: PICTURES: Get at least three pictures of you making/eating the hardtack and include them with your essay.

PART IV: SAMPLES: Bring your two finest pieces to class for your teacher to "taste test".