

FROM COOKIES TO SPONGE:

Pavlovas, scones, rocky road... these are some of the most iconic Kiwi desserts, but what are the most delicious? Over time, New Zealand pantries have come to boast some of the richest repertoires of cakes, biscuits and slices.

The [Isherwood Sisters](#) share the recipes of three of their favourite Kiwi classics: chocolate hokey pokey cookies, the fruit sponge and bliss balls.

Kea Magazine 2019 by Tricia Alach

Returned expat [Tricia Alach](#) has interviewed a number of returning Kiwis to find out what they found most surprising, challenging and joyful about their return. The experience of coming back to live in NZ is reported as a mixed bag

Sugar adds sweetness and texture to baking, however most recipes have more than you need. In their new book, [Sweet Enough](#), Nicky and Sarah have gathered together every Kiwi's favourite baking recipes, removed any excess sugar and adjusted the remaining ingredients so that the recipes still work and the finished products taste delicious. In fact, once that overpowering sweetness is removed, these recipes taste even better than before.



Chocolate Hokey Pokey Biscuits

Hokey Pokey biscuits tend to be very sweet and contain a lot of sugar, however by using a little “Kiwi ingenuity” and adding a chocolate button or date on top, this reduced sugar version still tastes fabulous and has an extra dash of flavour.

Preparation time 15 minutes

Cooking time 15-20 minutes

Makes 20 biscuits

100g butter

¼ cup (50g) sugar

1 tablespoon golden syrup

1 tablespoon milk

1½ cups (225g) plain flour

1 teaspoon baking soda

pinch of salt

20 chocolate buttons (or 10 dates cut in half)

Preheat the oven to 160°C fanbake or 170°C regular bake.

Line an oven tray with baking paper.

Put the butter, sugar, golden syrup and milk into a large saucepan. Heat over a medium heat, stirring constantly, until it just begins to boil. Remove from heat and allow the mixture to cool to lukewarm.

Sift the flour, baking soda and salt together. Add to the cooled mixture and stir until it forms a dough.

Roll the mixture into walnut-sized balls between your palms and place onto the prepared tray. Flatten lightly, then press a chocolate button (or half a date) in the centre of each biscuit.

Bake for 15-20 minutes until golden brown.

Remove from the tray and cool on a wire rack. Store in an airtight container.



Sponge

A good sponge is a classic of both New Zealand and British baking – light, fluffy and delicious. If you want to combine a little Kiwi with a British base you can't go past this sponge – and it has only 1 ½ teaspoons of sugar per serving.

Preparation time 15 minutes

Cooking time 20-25 minutes

Serves 12

4 Eggs, separated (room temperature)

⅓ cup (70g) caster sugar

¾ cup (100g) cornflour

1 tablespoon plain flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

Preheat the oven to 170°C fanbake or 180°C regular bake.

Grease or line a medium slice tin (approximately 20cm x 18cm) with baking paper.

Using an electric beater, whisk the egg whites until they form soft peaks.

Add the sugar and beat until it has dissolved.

Beat in the sugar yolks.

In a separate bowl sift together the cornflour, flour and baking powder.

Fold the dry ingredients into the egg mixture quickly but gently with a spatula or large metal spoon.

Once all the flour is mixed in, pour the batter into the prepared tin.

Bake for 20-25 minutes. Test by lightly pressing with your fingertips.

The cake should spring back and not leave indents.

When you remove the sponge from the oven, turn it out quickly onto a clean tea towel placed on a wire rack. The tea towel stops the sponge from sticking to the rack, and turning the sponge out quickly prevents it shrinking!

Gently remove the baking paper and leave the sponge to cool.

Turn the sponge over, and top with whipped cream and fruit.



Bliss Balls

This photograph of Bliss Balls shows how you can make four variations from just one recipe by rolling the balls in either coconut, chopped almonds, cocoa powder or dried raspberry powder.

Preparation time 30 minutes

Makes 24 balls

1 cup (150g) raw almonds

3 tablespoons cocoa powder

½ cup (50g) dessicated coconut

18 (100g) dried dates

5 (25g) prunes

zest of ½ orange, finely grated

juice of 1 orange

pinch of salt

dessicated coconut, chopped almonds, dried raspberry powder, chia seeds or cacao nibs, for rolling

Blitz the almonds in the food processor until they form a stiff paste.

This will take about 7 minutes at full speed.

Add the remaining ingredients and process for 1-2 minutes until smooth.

Shape the mixture into walnut sized balls, rolling them between the palms of your hands.

Coat the balls with dessicated coconut, chopped almonds, dried raspberry powder, chia seeds or cacao nibs.

Place in the fridge for 2-3 hours to set. Store in an airtight container at room temperature.