



BLUE AND GRAY DISPATCH

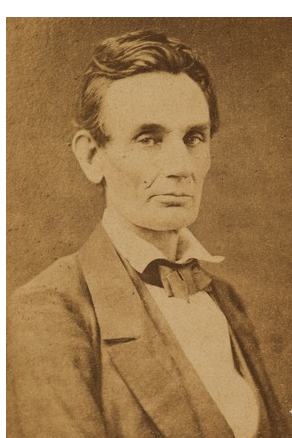
Abraham Lincoln's Love for Gingerbread Cookies

By Gloria Swift

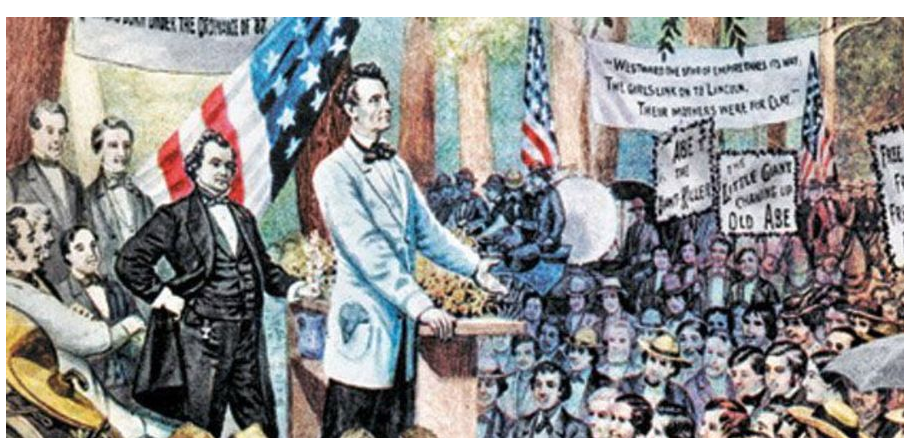
Lots of Presidents are and have been what we call "foodies" and we often have a pretty good idea what their special likes and dislikes are when it comes to food. However, our 16th President, Abraham Lincoln, didn't talk much about his favorite foods and we have limited resources to know about the special things he liked.

We do know that he enjoyed simple foods – especially the foods that he and his family would grow on their farm, such as potatoes and cabbage, or harvest from the wild, like currents and other seasonal berries. During the White House years, his basic staple for breakfast was one fried egg. Lunch might be an apple.

At one point however, Lincoln did mention a food from his childhood. And the knowledge of that food has come down to us in the form of a story that Lincoln told during one of his debates with Stephen A. Douglas.



Abraham Lincoln



Lincoln speaking at the debates, 1858. Douglas just behind Lincoln

During those debates in the late summer and fall of 1858, things would sometimes get a bit heated as the issues of the day were addressed by each candidate. At one debate, Lincoln paused with a story to allow things to cool down a bit and it was then that we learned about one of his favorite foods:

"When we lived in Indiana," Lincoln said, "once in a while my mother used to get some sorghum and ginger and make some gingerbread. It wasn't often and it was our biggest treat. One day I smelled the gingerbread and came into the house to get my share while it was still hot. My mother had baked me three gingerbread men. I took them out under a hickory tree to eat them.

There was a family near us poorer than we were, and their boy came along as I sat down. 'Abe,' he said, "gimme a man." I gave him one. He crammed it into his mouth in two bits and looked at me while I was biting the legs off my first one. 'Abe, gimme that other'n.' I wanted it myself, but I gave it to him and as it followed the first, I said to him, "You seem to like gingerbread." 'Abe,' he said, 'I don't s'pose anybody on earth likes gingerbread better'n I do- and gets less'n I do ..."

The story was a hit with the audience, and it was also picked up by the newspapers reporting the debate. Because this story became so well connected with Lincoln, he would often repeat it to visitors at the White House.

While the recipe that Lincoln's mother used has long been lost to history, below is a gingerbread recipe for you to try for yourself:

- 4 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 1/2 teaspoon cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 3/4 cup molasses

Directions:

Sift the flour, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and baking soda in a bowl.

In a large mixing bowl, blend the butter and brown sugar until combined. Add the eggs, 1 at a time, and then the molasses. Slowly add the flour mixture. Mix well after each addition of flour. The dough will be stiff.

Divide dough in half, flatten into 2 thick circles and wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 2 hours or until firm enough to roll out. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Roll out, cut into desired shapes and bake until golden brown.

This past February 12th was Lincoln's birthday. To celebrate (even if a couple days late), bake a batch of these cookies. And while it's a bit too cold to go out and sit under a hickory tree, find a comfy spot and someone to share them with. They might just become a favorite with you too.

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