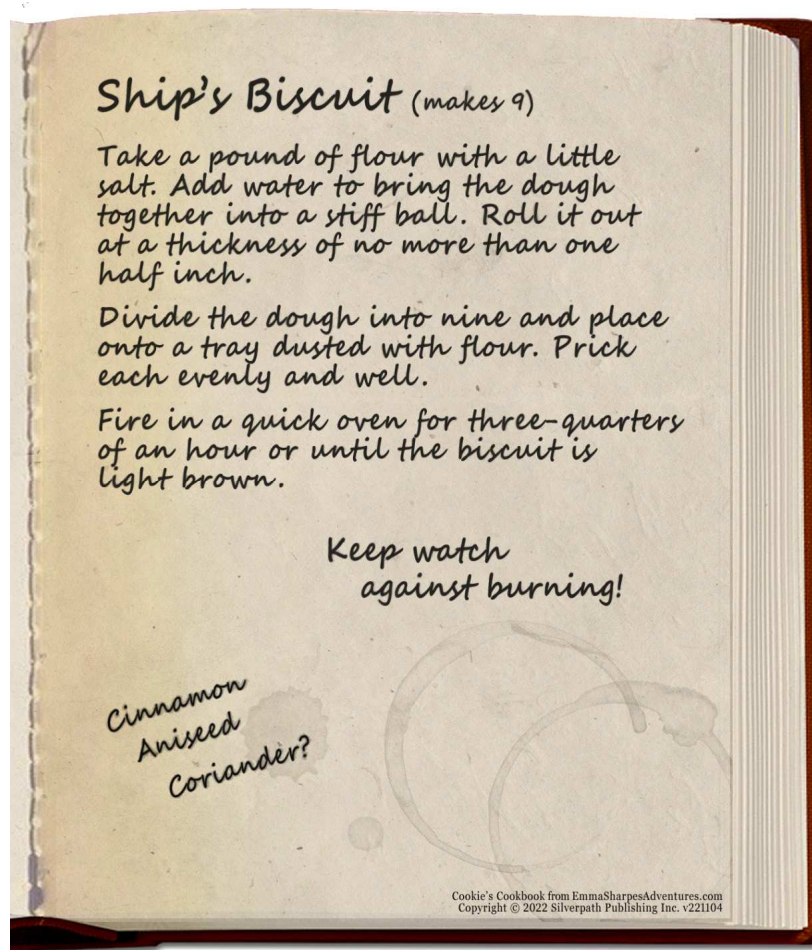


## Cookie's Cookbook – Ship's Biscuit



*“When I worked with my father in our family’s chandlery, supplying ships coming in and out of Yarmouth, I often heard stories about the biscuit being so infested with weevils the sailors ate them in the dark.”*  
 – *The Day the Pirates Went Mad*, Chapter 5: Ship’s Monkey, pg 40.

Ship’s biscuit, also known as hardtack and by other less savoury names like ‘worm castles’, was loaded aboard ships during the Age of Sail in hundred-weight bags. This hard, unleavened bread was a staple standalone food, but also served as a thickener or flour substitute in other meals.<sup>[1]</sup> And the recipe is very straightforward.

For the adjacent instructions, we used:

- A pound of whole wheat flour (3 cups)
- Several pinches of salt (2 tsp)
- Water (1 cup)

We rolled the dough out to the thickness of a pencil. Then we placed the squares of dough on a cooking tray, made 6 or 9 holes in each with a large-tined carving fork, and baked in the oven at 350° F for 45 minutes.

For longer journeys, re-bake the biscuits 1-3 additional times to remove all traces of moisture and help extend their longevity.

Be sure to cool completely before re-baking or storing.

**Beware! Likely to be very hard to chew.  
 Suggest first softening in a stew, soup, or drink.**

### What we learned:

Soldiers and sailors have been using some form of this recipe with locally available ground grains for centuries. For example, King Richard I embarked on the Third Crusade with biscuit that was a mix of barley, beans, and rye.<sup>[2]</sup>

The oldest known piece of hardtack is on display at the maritime museum in Kronborg castle, Elsinore, Denmark and is 170 years old.<sup>[3]</sup>

*Wording of Emma’s transcription is inspired by examples of 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century recipes, eg: <http://www.godecookery.com/engrec/engrec.html>*

[1] <https://youtube.com/watch?v=FyjcJUGuFVg> | [2] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hardtack#History> | [3] <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22172272>