

Celebrity chefs concoct new recipes with a favourite snack from Povey's

TV's oatcake treats are ready in minutes



The recipes

The Ingredients

Staffordshire oatcakes, goats' cheese, dry cured bacon, red onion, rocket, cherry tomatoes

Quantity

1 oatcake
2 tbsp goats' cheese, to spread
1 orange, peeled and cut into slices
1 tbsp honey
4 tbsp soft brown sugar
icing sugar, to dust
double cream, to drizzle

Method

1. Pre-heat the oven to 220C/425F/Gas 7.
2. Lay the oatcake out flat and spread the goats' cheese over.
3. Scatter the orange slices over and then sprinkle with the sugar. Wrap up the oatcake in kitchen foil and place on a non-stick-baking tray. Bake in the oven for 2-3 minutes.
4. Remove from the oven and transfer to a serving plate. Dust generously with icing sugar and drizzle with cream to serve.

tomatoes, cut in half
1 tsp olive oil
2 slices bacon
¼ onion, peeled and sliced
1 oatcake
goats' cheese, to spread
a few rocket leaves

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 220C/425F/Gas 7.
2. Fry the tomatoes in a dry pan for 6-8 minutes, or until softened.
3. Heat the oil in a separate pan and sauté the onion and bacon for 2-3 minutes, or until the bacon is cooked and golden.
4. Spread the oatcake with the goats' cheese and then scatter the rocket leaves over.
5. Top with the tomatoes, bacon and onion mixture and then place on a baking tray and bake in the oven for 3-4 minutes.
6. Remove from the oven and transfer to a plate to serve.

Ingredients
6-8 baby plum

Above, Steve Povey with his oatcakes that were featured on Ready Steady Cook, and clockwise from bottom right, the show's presenter Ainsley Harriott and chefs Anthony Worrall Thompson and Brian Turner

BY ANDREW WAKEFIELD

CELEBRITY chefs have been concocting mouth-watering recipes with one of Leek's favourite foods.

BBC2 programme Ready Steady Cook recently featured Povey's Oatcakes — a brand of the local delight which is marketed by Moorlands District councillor for Leek, Steve Povey.

Thousands of Povey's oatcakes are sold in Leek every week — including more than 1,200 at the Aldi supermarket in Haywood Street.

Last Wednesday, food experts Anthony Worrall Thompson and Brian Turner whipped-up two dishes with the oatcakes as part of the "quickie bag round" — a section of the show where chefs have 10 minutes to utilise a bag of mystery ingredients.

Show producers spotted the product being exhibited at the Royal Agricultural Society of England's Royal Show — held from July 3-6 at Stoneleigh.

Mr Povey said: "I thought it was a wind-up at first, but people kept calling me to say they had seen them on the TV."

"You can't help but be flattered at them using the product. They are very talented people. I can also confirm that nothing on the show is set-up — they don't know what's going to be in the quickie bag before they see it."

"We did a stand at the royal show and one of the producers of the programme picked them up."

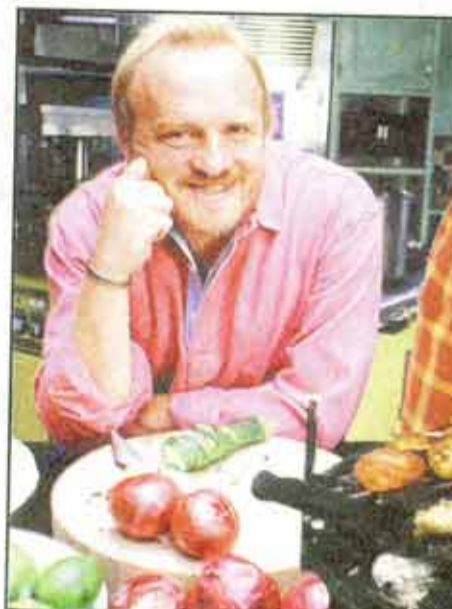
"They phoned me up to say

they were using them on the show. The interesting thing was they froze them until they appeared on the show.

"People say you can't freeze them and then use them, but this proves them wrong."

"We are no strangers to TV though — the oatcakes appeared on a programme in the U.S. called Gourmet America. We have also had a Japanese film crew in to video us at work."

And we must not forget Leek's own oatcake shop on the corner of Shoobridge Street and Haywood Street where hundreds of oatcakes are made each day — and sold in various forms.



IF LATELY YOU'VE BEEN WONDERING WHERE TO GET YOUR FIX, THEN FEAR NO MORE...

Oatcake addicts rejoice!

by James Crisp

FOR THE last few weeks people all over Macclesfield have been wondering where to get their oats.

This week we at the Express can put those desperately in need out of their misery.

Sadly, the famous Macclesfield oatcake - a working man's crepe - will not be gracing the town's shelves for the foreseeable future.

But luckily, help is at hand.

Every morning, rain, wind, shine or snow, a lone van sets out from Biddulph laden with a precious cargo of

Povey's Staffordshire oatcakes.

The small vehicle arrives at "Michael and Laura's" stall and delicatessen in the Indoor Market. The delicacy sells like hotcakes.

The emergency measures have been put into place after Dales Oatcake Bakery on John Street in Macclesfield closed down.

Michael Bell, who runs the stall with his daughter Laura said: "We've been here for about 14 years and we have always sold Macclesfield oatcakes but there's been none since Dales closed.

"We get the Staffordshire ones in now and they've been selling better than ever. Some people prefer them some peo-

ple don't - it is all a matter of taste."

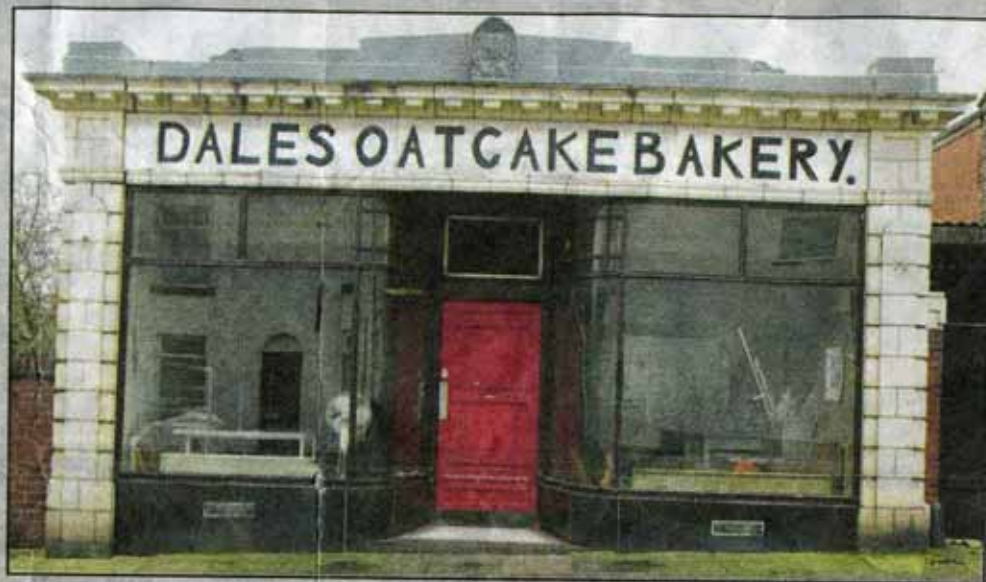
Michael's assistant Helen Hough chipped in: "People are lost without their oatcakes. It's the end of an era.

"I once wrote out a recipe for Macc oatcakes for a customer who was emigrating to Australia. She couldn't live without them.

"There's another gentleman who lives halfway up Snowdonia - he comes in and stocks up with oatcakes then goes back home and stores them in his fridge. He buys in bulk.

"Personally, I like mine with eggs and bacon."

Michael, who recently expanded his business with a luxury stall in the market



END OF AN ERA: The closed Dales Oatcake Bakery on John Street in Macclesfield.



We've got our oats! Michael Bell and Helen Hough with their Staffordshire oatcakes at their new stall in Macclesfield's Indoor Market.

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selling farmfoods, has sold the famously versatile 20p snack for over 35 years.

He said: "It is a shame we can't stock Macclesfield oatcakes but these ones are very popular as well. We get them from Povey's, which is a one man band outfit.

"We prefer to get our stock from individual suppliers - their food is always far superior."

Oatcakes for Commons people



TASTY ORDER: Steve Povey has won an order to supply the House of Commons with his oatcakes

Picture: Shaun Smith

A TASTE of North Staffordshire is to be sampled by Britain's leaders. Oatcakes will be on the menu in the House of Commons and the House of Lords for two weeks as part of a drive to promote food from the Midlands and north West. Steve Povey, of Povey's Oatcakes in

Biddulph, will be supplying 60 dozen of the tasty treats and they will appear on menus in a variety of guises from Monday. Mr Povey said: "It's part of the Heart of England promotion and we have high hopes. A lot of people down there have probably never tasted them and I'm sure they'll give them a try. They may use them

as a starter in the restaurant or as a snack in the canteen. Our local MPs have said they'll be making the most of having them on the menu too." His favourite types are leek and cheese with streaky bacon, and for those with a sweet tooth a blackcurrant puree topped with fresh cream and icing sugar.

Expansion project

On your marks for oatcake race

A FAMOUS North Staffordshire delicacy is at the centre of the Donna Louise Trust's next big fund-raising campaign. It is hoped the humble oatcake will help to raise pots of cash for the children's charity through a number of money-making activities entitled February Feast.

On February 21, in conjunction with Signal 1's annual pancake race, the trust will host its own oatcake race along Piccadilly in Hanley. Volunteers are asked to come forward to enter the wacky contest, which will involve stuffing an oatcake with a host of tasty fillings before racing to the finish. The charity is also appealing to groups to host fund-raising oatcake meals instead of their usual coffee mornings.



TASTY FUND-RAISER: Steve Povey with some of the oatcakes he will be donating to the trust

Picture: Shaun Smith

The trust will supply the oatcakes free and groups will simply need to fill the delicacies and direct the proceeds to the Donna Louise Trust.

A host of businesses and organisations are already supporting the oatcake scheme. The Plum Pudding Pub, in Rugeley, Business Networking International,

The Chase Golf Club in Cannock, the Moathouse Hotel in Acton Trussel, The Manor at Cheadle and Knight's Garage in Cheadle will be offering oatcakes to their customers to raise much-needed funds.

Steve Povey, of Povey's Oatcakes, in Biddulph, has generously agreed to supply all the oatcakes at a heavily discounted price. Head of fund-raising Judith Herrod said: "The February Feast fund-raiser enables supporters to enjoy their favourite North Staffordshire food while raising money for the trust at the same time."

● If you are interested in competing in the oatcake race, hosting an oatcake meal or putting oatcakes on the menu in your workplace, call Hannah or Philippa at the trust on 01782 654444.

Potty about the oatcake

IT'S POTTERS' holidays in the Potteries: for an entire fortnight the towns and villages around Stoke-on-Trent close down. But not quite.

Those traditional outlets that sell North Staffordshire oatcakes never really shut up shop.

Forget black pudding —

Steve Dixon samples specimens the size of plates and argues that they are the most truly regional British speciality food

oatcakes are arguably the most truly regional of Britain's speciality foods.

Stoke-on-Trent alone has more than 25 dedicated oatcake bakers. North Staffordshire oatcakes are the size of

side plates and as floppy as wet chamois.

Potteries folk eat their oatcakes stuffed with classic fry-up food. Bacon is grilled on enamel plates. Tinned tomatoes are seasoned, simmered and spooned on to the plates with the bacon. Grated Cheddar cheese is sprinkled over the tomatoes and grilled until bubbling. The oatcakes are steamed and served hot. People reach for the brown sauce, mop up the dip and forget their cholesterol levels.

North Staffordshire oatcake bakers are fiercely independent. The trade association forced on them during the Second World War rationing fell apart soon afterwards.

You have to buy the business to get a recipe from an oatcake baker. Even so, the recipes are basic: oatmeal, flour, milk, water, salt, sugar and yeast. The batter spits and steams when ladled on to rows of desk-sized griddles behind the shop counters.

Local farmhouse oatcakes became a terrace-house industry in Josiah Wedgwood's day. Glen and Sue Fowler's Hole in the Wall, Waterloo Street, Hanley, is the last terrace-house bakery. Customers are served through the front window.

Lorry drivers call in for hearty all-day oatcake breakfasts at Castle Oatcakes, London Road, Newcastle under Lyme. Double oatcake specials put Big Macs to shame. You get bacon, sausage, beans, tomato, egg, cheese and mushrooms inside two oatcakes for £1.80. A dozen oatcakes cost 80p.

High Lane Oatcakes, Burs-

lem, sells chilli con carne oatcake ready meals. One customer swears the oatcake recipe is the same as for those delivered to expatriate author Arnold Bennett in London and Paris early this century.

Baker Roy Gavin smiles knowingly and tells another story about his long-distance oatcakes: an Australian mail-order customer once arrived in the shop, saying how well they travelled.

The factory oatcakes made by North Staffordshire Oatcake Bakers, and sold in Sainsbury's, are markedly inferior to "proper" oatcakes. There is no "real oatcake" campaign but many of those who talk of the proper article despise the factory oatcakes.

On the other hand, some locals prefer the factory ones. Many buy them from supermarkets for convenience. Derek Boote, the owner of North Staffordshire Oatcake Bakers, has a box



Oatcake: Potteries staple

full of testimonials from far-flung Sainsbury's customers that no public-relations agency could outdo.

Oatcakes were once widespread throughout Britain's upland regions where oats thrive and wheat withers. In the 10th century, Welsh king Hywel Dda ruled that oatcakes given as part of a bondsman's rent should be 12in across and not bend in the middle when held at the edges. Scottish oatcakes used to be as big.

Elizabeth David's *English Bread and Yeast Cookery* (Penguin, £16) has oatcake recipes from Donegal, Cumbria, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Wales, Scotland and North Staffordshire. Leek oatcakes are bigger and thicker than their North Staffordshire cousins, calling for real milk and less — if any — flour. North Staffordshire oatcakes are derided for using cheap ingredients, mainly dried milk, and for having shrunk over the years.

Derbyshire oatcakes are still more substantial. They are sliced, fried in the bacon pan and served on the plate. Holmfield Bakery, Burbage, is Derbyshire's biggest oatcake baker and the nearby Buxton's Palace Hotel serves Derbyshire oatcake breakfasts.

Macclesfield had an oatcake industry to rival the Potteries until town planning and supermarkets arrived. Arthur Dale in John Street has the town's last oatcake bakery, where he bakes three types of oatcake. There are the two varieties of Macclesfield oatcake — oatmeal with no flour and those with oatmeal and wholemeal flour — and Dale also bakes North Staffordshire oatcakes, as does Bates Bakery in Ashbourne, Derbyshire.

POVEY'S OATCAKES - 10 years a tosser!

By Helen Povey

Over the last ten years Povey's oatcakes has become somewhat of a household name throughout the Moorlands, Potteries, Congleton and Macclesfield areas. The owner, Mr Steve Povey, with nothing more than an oatcake recipe, decided to become a professional tosser back in 1992.



Povey's oatcake shop itself is situated on Biddulph High Street. During the last decade Mr Povey has built up a reputable wholesale and retail business and now manufactures more than 2500 dozen oatcakes every week (now that's a lot of tossing)! Oatcakes aside you can also get fresh fruit pikelets, pies, and cakes. This of course includes Povey's infamous Vanilla Slices. If you haven't already tried one of them they do come highly recommended! And if you fancy a take away filled oatcake just pop into Povey's and you can watch the oatcakes being made on a traditional Baxton while you wait.

A few years ago Mr Povey decided to give his customers a variation on the traditional Staffordshire oatcake and so created his own unique 'flavoured' oatcakes. These are available in Chilli & Onion, Garlic & Pepper and Onion & Chive. Not stopping there, Mr Povey then thought up the idea of providing a filled oatcake in a microwavable box. Since their launch four years ago they have proved to be extremely popular with Mr Povey's customers. This is especially the case at Stoke City's Britannia Stadium where they have become a great favourite among the crowd at every home match.

After a decade in the business Mr Povey is still proving to be one of the top oatcake producers in the area. All of his customers, suppliers and associates are pleased to congratulate him on being 'ten years a tosser' and wish Povey's Oatcakes a very successful and prosperous future.