

## *Scones & Biscuits from whole wheat flour and sourdough*



Scones in Scotland and England seem to be identical to the Southern Biscuits of the American South. Both are currently leavened with baking powder, and both are essentially made with flour from soft wheat. Milk or buttermilk is a major part of the liquid and fat such as lard or butter is included, and salt.

There is reference<sup>1</sup> to sourdough biscuits being the pride of the cowboys' cooking skills in the days before the 1850s when baking powder, and a decade later packaged yeast were introduced. Without that reference I was in any case assuming that the scone (or biscuit) was ancient, and sourdough leavened for thousands of years.

For this basic scone and biscuit recipe I suggest using whole Sonora wheat flour, homemade or purchased cultured milk such as yogurt or buttermilk, and unsalted butter. Somehow plain pasteurized milk produces a less thrilling flavor than cultured milk. Replacement of butter with olive oil or some other chosen healthful fat or oil is possible.

This recipe is particularly useful for whole wheat flours containing less than 12% protein, and for any whole wheat flour that is somehow difficult to make up into a satisfactory tall airy loaf. Lower protein value in the flour is compensated by the added milk or milk product. These scones and biscuits should also make up well with whole soft red wheat flours; each will have its own characteristic color and flavor from the particular whole wheat.

In Britain the raisin scone is popular, and differs from the plain recipe simply in the addition of raisins, and possibly some spice such as nutmeg. Cheese scones are also frequently made, but this plain scone made with yogurt and butter can be zesty enough without adding cheese.

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<sup>1</sup> *American Cooking*, Dale Brown and editors, Time Life Books, New York. 1968. Page 172.  
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Ingredients	Bakers percent	Grams	Ounces	Cups & Spoons
Whole wheat flour	100	500	16	3 cups
Enzyme active malt	1	5	0.16	1 teaspoon
Raisins or currants (Optional)	30	150	4.80	1 cup
Nutmeg (optional)	Sprinkle			
Butter	4	20	0.64	1 tablespoon
Salt	1.5	7.5	0.24	1 ½ teaspoons
Vitamin C (Optional)	0.008	0.04	0.001	Tip of teaspoon
Yogurt or buttermilk or Filmjolk* or milk	70	350	11.2	1 ½ cups
Water	As needed			
Sourdough starter	10	50	1.60	2 tablespoons

\*Swedish cultured milk. Culture and method available from [www.gemcultures.com](http://www.gemcultures.com)

[] Measure out whole wheat flour and enzyme active malt into mixing bowl. Mix briefly to evenly distribute malt.

[] Measure out the butter and add to flour mixture. Rub the butter into the flour mixture until evenly incorporated and texture is of fine granules.

[] *Optionally add the raisins and nutmeg and mix to evenly incorporate them.*

[] Separately in a jug, measure the salt *and optionally the vitamin C crystals.*

[] Measure the chosen milk product into the jug containing salt. Stir to dissolve the salt.

[] Measure the sourdough starter into the jug containing milk product and salt. Mix well.

[] Add the contents of the jug to the flour mixture in the mixing bowl. Mix until flour is completely incorporated. *Note that there is no need for prolonged mixing or kneading; only enough mixing is needed to bring the ingredients completely together. The dough can be fairly stiff. If you prefer a softer dough, add more water or more milk product. Make a note of the amount added so that it can be mixed altogether with salt and sourdough before being added to the flour mix, when next you make these scones.*

[] Press the dough down into the mixing bowl. Cover and allow to rise until double in volume. *This takes from 6 -12 hours according to the temperature. The best temperature range is 75 – 80 °F (24 – 27°C).*

[] Fist the dough down and knead briefly by repeatedly folding from the edge to the middle and fisting it down. Take the dough from the bowl and form into two equal dough balls, as though making snowballs\*. *Use water moistened hands to handle the dough.*

[] On a square of parchment paper, press the dough into a disk approximately half inch thick, and approximately 8 inches in diameter. Cover with a cloth and allow to rest for about 2 hours.

[] Preheat oven at 475°F, with a baking stone or tiles in place\*\*.

[] Provide steam in the oven approximately 20 minutes before baking time by adding a cup or two of water to a loaf pan and setting it to one side of the baking area in the oven. *When the water boils it will fill the oven with steam, so open oven door cautiously to vent the steam when the oven door is next opened. Leave the pan of water in the oven for the entire baking time.*

[] Just before baking use a dough scraper to cut the dough into 4 *farls* (or quarters) or 8 *scones*. Use an oven peel to slide the dough and parchment paper onto the baking stone in the oven.

[] Bake at 450 - 475°F for 15 - 20 minutes. Allow the scones to cool to room temperature on a rack. Serve at room temperature. *Note that the scones have a thin crisp crust initially. My personal preference is to store the scones in a closed container until the next day, while the crust softens to the same texture as the crumb. These scones store well for 2 days or more and can be refreshed by warming.*

\* Alternatively to make *round biscuits*: Divide the dough into 8 or 16 pieces, and form each piece into a ball. Coat each piece of dough lightly in flour, and on a cloth press out with fingertips to a disk approximately half an inch thick. Allow the disks to rest on the cloth and covered by a cloth for approximately 2 hours, before baking as suggested above. Flour dusted biscuits will slide into the oven on a baking peel.

\*\* To bake scones on a griddle such as the Bethany Heritage griddle with lid [www.bethanyhousewares.com](http://www.bethanyhousewares.com), preheat the griddle at 350°F. Bake the scones with the lid in place, for 15 minutes, and then turn them over to bake for another 15 minutes.

