

1933 Oven & Measurement Quick-Reference

Old recipes spoke in “a quick oven” and “a lump of butter the size of an egg.” Here is every one of those, in numbers your kitchen understands. Print it, tape it inside a cupboard door.

1 What the Old Oven Words Mean

WHEN THE RECIPE SAYS...	SET YOUR DIAL TO	BEST FOR
Very slow oven	250–275°F (120–135°C)	Meringues, drying fruit, long custards
Slow oven	300–325°F (150–165°C)	Baked beans, milk puddings, fruitcake
Moderate oven	350–375°F (175–190°C)	Most cakes, quick breads, casseroles
Moderately hot	375–400°F (190–205°C)	Muffins, cornbread, loaf cakes
Hot / “quick” oven	425–450°F (220–230°C)	Biscuits, popovers, pastry, pie shells
Very hot oven	450–500°F (230–260°C)	Fast browning, thin-crust breads

The old cooks judged heat by hand: a pinch of flour dropped on the oven floor that turned golden in about five minutes was a moderate oven — browning faster than that meant a hot one.

2 Old Measures, Made Plain

SPOONS, CUPS & THE OLD VESSELS		“A LUMP THE SIZE OF...” & HANDY WEIGHTS	
1 tablespoon	= 3 teaspoons	Butter, size of an egg	= ¼ cup (4 tbsp / 2 oz)
1 dessertspoon	= 2 teaspoons	Butter, size of a walnut	= 1 tablespoon
1 fluid ounce	= 2 tablespoons	Butter, size of a hazelnut	≈ 1 teaspoon
¼ cup	= 4 tablespoons	A pinch / a few grains	≈ ⅛ teaspoon
1 cup	= 16 tbsp = 8 fl oz = ½ pint	A saltspoon	= ¼ teaspoon
1 gill	= ½ cup (4 fl oz)	1 stick butter	= ½ cup = 8 tbsp = 4 oz
1 wineglass	= ¼ cup (2 fl oz)	1 cup flour	≈ 4½ oz (125 g)
1 teacup	≈ ¾ cup (6 fl oz)	1 cup sugar	≈ 7 oz (200 g)
1 tumbler / coffee cup	≈ 1 cup (8 fl oz)	1 cup rolled oats	≈ 3 oz (90 g)
1 pint	= 2 cups · 1 quart = 4 cups	1 cup cornmeal	≈ 5 oz (140 g)

*Oven ranges follow the standard American scale used across period cookbooks and match the temperatures given throughout *The Depression Era Cookbook* (“a hot oven” = 425°F, “a slow oven” = 300°F). Weights match the recipes in the book.*

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— Hazel Calloway

Don't Have It? Use This

The Depression cook's real gift was making do. When the shelf — yours or the supermarket's — comes up short, here is what to reach for instead.

1 Out of It? Old-Kitchen Swaps

IF A RECIPE CALLS FOR...	USE INSTEAD
1 cup buttermilk or sour milk	1 cup milk + 1 tbsp vinegar or lemon juice ; stir, let stand 5 min
1 tsp baking powder	$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp baking soda + $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cream of tartar
1 cup self-rising flour	1 cup flour + $1\frac{1}{2}$ tsp baking powder + $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp salt
1 egg (in a cake or quick bread)	1 tbsp vinegar + 1 tsp baking soda — the “war cake” trick
1 cup butter	Lard, shortening , or bacon drippings, measure for measure
1 cup brown sugar	1 cup white sugar + 1 tbsp molasses
1 cup whole milk	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup evaporated milk + $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
1 tbsp cornstarch (to thicken)	2 tbsp flour , cooked a little longer
1 cup cake flour	1 cup flour, less 2 tbsp, plus 2 tbsp cornstarch
Cream of tartar (for tartness)	An equal splash of lemon juice or vinegar

2 Old Word, Today's Shelf

Vintage recipes name things your supermarket no longer labels the old way. Here is what to buy now.

THE RECIPE SAYS...	LOOK FOR...
Sweet milk	Plain whole milk (“sweet” just meant not soured)
Oleo / oleomargarine	Margarine , or butter if you prefer
Graham flour	Whole-wheat flour
Salt pork	A thick slab of bacon or a fatty pork belly piece
Suet	Shortening , or hard beef fat from the butcher
Chipped / dried beef	Thin-sliced deli dried beef (deli or jar)
Store cheese / rat cheese	A block of sharp cheddar
Sweet cream	Heavy (whipping) cream
Pot liquor	The savory cooking water from greens or beans — keep it

Every swap here is a real Depression-kitchen practice, the same reasoning behind the mock dishes in The Depression Era Cookbook. When in doubt, taste and adjust — that is exactly what they did.

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