

Cheddar and Black Pepper Scones

Scones, formerly known mainly to fanciers of British food, have become very familiar to most of us on this side of the ocean, due to their bakery and coffee-shop popularity over the past 5 years or so. Wedges, squares or circles of a buttery biscuit-type dough, baked quickly at high heat till golden brown, scones usually come plain or dotted with fruit or nuts. Spread with butter and jam or preserves, they've become a staple at breakfast and tea time.

But scones needn't be thought of as simply a sweet treat. Offer a savory version in the bread basket at your main meal. They're very similar to baking powder biscuits, and are easily seasoned to go with whatever you're serving.

3 cups King Arthur Unbleached All-Purpose Flour
2 tablespoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter
1 cup (4 ounces) grated Cheddar cheese
1 tablespoon coarsely ground black pepper*
3/4 cup (6 ounces) buttermilk or plain yogurt
milk (for glaze)

*This amount of black pepper will make very spicy scones. For less heat, decrease the amount of pepper.

In a large bowl, sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and sugar. Cut in the butter and cheese. Stir in the black pepper. Refrigerate the dough for half an hour. Gently stir in the buttermilk or yogurt. Gather the mixture into a ball with your hands, and on a well-floured surface roll or pat the dough into a 12 x 8-inch rectangle approximately 3/4-inch thick.

Grease a baking sheet. Using a large spatula, or a couple of spatulas, transfer the dough to the baking sheet. Use a dough scraper, baker's bench knife or a knife to cut dough into 1 1/2-inch squares. Separate the squares slightly on the baking sheet. Brush each square with a little milk.

Bake the scones in a preheated 400°F oven for 15 to 20 minutes, or until they're very lightly browned. *Yield: about 40 small scones.*

Nutrition information per serving (2 scones, 42g): 132 cal, 6.4g fat, 4g protein, 14g complex carbohydrates, 1g sugar, 1g dietary fiber, 19mg cholesterol, 302mg sodium, 48mg potassium, 62RE vitamin A, 1mg iron, 159mg calcium, 81mg phosphorus.

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