

# Wilhelmina's Christmas Cake Recipe

Wilhelmina's well thumbed and well loved 19<sup>th</sup> century recipe has had all kinds of additions and changes made to it since her original version! Her ingredients would have taken much longer to prepare as they do now - her currants needed to be "cleaned, stoned, picked and dried" and she would have made her own butter which had to be "perfectly free of water". It must have been quite a rich cake as she used 40 eggs, with 1 ½ lbs of flour, ½ lb semolina and 2 wine glassfuls of the best Brandy available.. Over the years, her daughters, and also their cooks would have made a little change here and there to both the ingredients and proportions, according to their liking and in the introduction of a new ingredient. Prunes and plums were eventually added by her granddaughter, Maud to the recipe, butter was replaced with ghee (clarified butter) and baking powder added to give the cake a lighter feel. Irene, Wilhelmina's great granddaughter has written across the side of the page "This quantity will make a 16 lb cake".

One of my grandmothers definitely had a Hindu cook, as a quarter of the way down the left side of the page are two recognisable Hindu symbols. The first one is "Om" a symbol of the Absolute – as the cross is to Christians, and the second is a Hindu swastika – an ancient symbol of good luck and auspiciousness.

