

Stir About & Potatoe Pie

Take yourself back about 130 years and imagine if you will:

The mill close by is about to stop and release the work people to their morning meal. In the house are two or three young children, mother is just about to pour the porridge from a large iron pan into a large brown earthenware dish that sits in the centre of a sturdy wooden table scrubbed almost white from mothers daily "set to". Around the table are as many brown mess pots as there are members of the family, over two years of age. In these utensils which hold about a pint, skimmed milk as been poured, in comes the father and five or six lads and lasses, four or five sit down on chairs while the younger children stand (they grow while they are standing) it used to be said. The father dashes his spoon into the porridge dish and lifts as much as he can, the children put in their spoon and take out a little at once, then place the spoon into the milk dish and so they go on dipping first into the porridge dish then into the milk dish until it is all used up, and then of they go back to the mill until noon. At noon a similar scenario took place this time the meal is Flour Porridge, poured in the middle. Sometimes after the flour porridge there would be a piece of bread and butter, bread and treacle or bread and cheese. On baking day there would be a Potatoe Pie made in the large brown dish about 7lbs or 8lbs in weight, mostly without beef or mutton though sometimes with the odd bone. Then a little currant or mint cake for afters. On another day Stir About comprising of meal, bacon fat, salt and pepper and partly boiled like porridge. The next baking day there might be a "Collop Mowfin" or cake measuring about 15-18 inches across on which were placed rashers of Bacon, the cake being cut in wedge shape slices. The younger children and the half timers having to be satisfied with the fat that had run from the rashers. Saturdays and Sundays might see a bit of fish or beef but this was very rare.