

Brack, Ireland's traditional fruit bread, has been a festive dish since ancient times. It was eaten at Lughnasa (the first day of autumn and the start of the harvest), at Samhain (the first day of winter), at Imbolc (St Brigid's Day) the first day of spring and at Beltaine (the first day of summer). All Souls' Night (Hallowe'en) has supplanted the pre-Christian festival of Samhain, but it's still the night on which brack is eaten in Ireland. A ring is placed in the brack to herald marriage the following spring for whoever finds it. In some parts of the country they also insert a dried pea for spinsterhood, a bean for riches, a rag for poverty, and a piece of matchstick, which predicts that your husband will beat you! There are two versions of the origin of the name barm brack: that it comes from the Irish bairgain breac (speckled bread), or that it derives from the use of barm, yeast drawn off fermenting malt. Brack made at home is raised not with yeast but with baking powder and is called a "tea brack" because the dried fruit is soaked in tea.

- 1 kg/2 lb 2 oz rhubarb
- 110 g/4 oz/1 generous cup sugar
- 1 egg white, beaten until stiff

for the potato pastry:

- 225 g/8 oz/1 ½ cups cooked, floury potatoes, peeled while hot
- 225 g/8 oz/2 cups unsifted white flour
- 1 level tsp baking powder
- a pinch of salt
- 180 g/6 oz butter
- a little beaten egg

# Rhubarb Tart

Clean and cut up the rhubarb into short lengths. Place in a pan with the sugar and simmer for about 10 minutes or until the rhubarb is barely tender. Fold in the egg white and cool. To make the pastry put the hot cooked potatoes through a potato ricer or a mouli food mill. Sift flour and baking powder together. Rub in the butter. Stir in the potatoes lightly and then add just enough beaten egg to make a firm dough. Dust a board or worktop with flour. Roll out pastry into two rounds. Line a 20-25 cm/8-10 inch flan or tart tin with half the pastry. Spoon (or pour) the filling into the pastry case and top with the remaining pastry. Bake at 200°C/400°F/Gas 6 for 40-50 minutes until the pastry is cooked through and golden brown. Serve warm with whipped cream.

Serves: 4-6  
 Preparation: 15'  
 Cooking: 50-60'  
 Difficulty: ●  
 Flavour: ●●  
 Kcal (per serving): 391  
 Proteins (per serving): 8  
 Fats (per serving): 23  
 Nutritional Value: ●●●

