

Army Hardtack Recipe

Ingredients:

- 4 cups flour (preferably whole wheat)
- 4 teaspoons salt
- Water (about 2 cups)

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Mix the flour and salt together in a bowl. Add just enough water (less than two cups, so that the mixture will stick together, producing a dough that won't stick to hands. Mix the dough by hand. Roll the dough out, shaping it roughly into a rectangle. Cut the dough into squares about 3 x 3 inches and ½ inch thick. After cutting the squares, press a pattern of four rows of four holes into each square, using a nail, or other such object. Do not punch all the way through the dough. It should resemble a modern saltine cracker. Turn the square over and do the same to the other side.

Place the squares on an ungreased cookie sheet in the oven and bake for 30 minutes. Turn each piece over and bake for another 30 minutes. The crackers should be slightly brown on both sides. Makes about 10 squares.



This legendary cracker, consisting of flour, water, and salt, was the main staple of the soldier's diet. If kept dry, it could be preserved almost indefinitely. Before a campaign, troops were typically issued three day's worth of rations, including thirty pieces of hardtack. Hardtack was sometimes jokingly referred to as "tooth dullers" or "sheet iron". The preferred way to prepare hardtack was to soften them in water, and then fry them in bacon grease. However, on the march, soldiers ate them "raw" with a piece of salt pork, bacon, or some sugar.

Questions to consider:

- What other foods might an army on the march require? How would they obtain other sources of food?
- How did your hardtack turn out? Would you enjoy eating this for days or weeks at a time?