

lamingtons

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Lamingtons

Squares of butter sponge dipped in thin chocolate icing and rolled in desiccated coconut. Named for Lord Lamington, governor of Queensland in the 1890s, whose cook is supposed to have improvised them for unexpected guests; Australia keeps a national day for them on 21 July and New Zealand disputes the origin, as it does with the pavlova.

The technique that matters is counterintuitive: use stale cake.

What makes it work

- **Day-old sponge, or better, sponge frozen for an hour.** Fresh cake tears apart in the icing. A firm, slightly dry crumb absorbs a little icing and holds together.
- **The icing must be thin.** Powdered sugar, cocoa, butter and hot milk, thin enough to run off a fork in a stream. Thick icing gives a heavy shell and clumps the coconut.
- **Keep the icing warm** over a pan of hot water throughout, or it stiffens by the fifth cube.
- **Two forks, or a skewer.** Dip, drain for five seconds, then drop straight into a tray of coconut and toss.
- **Dry on a rack for two hours** before stacking.

Ingredients

Makes 16.

Sponge — one 20 cm square tin:

- 175 g unsalted butter, softened
- 175 g caster sugar
- 3 [eggs](#)
- 175 g self-raising flour, or plain with 8 g baking powder
- 3 g fine salt
- 3 tbsp [milk](#)
- 1 tsp vanilla — see [Pure vanilla extract](#)

Icing:

- 400 g powdered sugar
- 50 g cocoa powder — see [Cocoa and cocoa mixes](#)
- 30 g unsalted butter
- 150 ml boiling [milk](#) or water

To coat: 250 g desiccated [coconut](#)

Optional: 150 g raspberry jam, for the filled version

Method

Bake the sponge at **180 °C / 350 °F for 30–35 minutes** by the creaming method: butter and sugar four minutes, eggs one at a time, fold in flour and salt, loosen with milk.

Cool completely, then wrap and leave overnight, or freeze one hour. Trim the crusts and cut into 16 cubes.

Sift the powdered sugar and cocoa into a bowl, add the butter, and whisk in the boiling liquid until smooth and runny. Keep the bowl over a pan of hot water.

Spread the coconut in a wide tray. Drop a cube into the icing, turn it with two forks, lift, drain briefly, then roll it in the coconut. Set on a rack.

Dry two hours before serving.

Notes

- **For filled lamingtons**, split each cube horizontally after cutting, spread with jam and whipped cream, and reassemble before dipping. This is the Queensland bakery standard.
- If the icing thickens, thin it with a teaspoon of boiling water, not more sugar.
- **Keeps three days** in a tin; the coconut goes soft after that.

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