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with Chris-Rachael Oseland



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# À Mèal fìc fòr à Kìng

(Or, Breadboard of the Rings)

GagMen Episode 17

Written by the GagMen on the GagMen Adventure Writing Podcast  
Recipes written and provided by Special Guest Chris-Rachael Oseland

The Kitchen Overlord: <http://kitchenoverlord.com/>

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Goblin Cuthroat artwork is copyright (C) 2011 Dave Allsop

“The Party” Image thanks to Luigi Castellani

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## Introduction

*In the world of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth there lies the tranquil and fair land of the Shire. After the events of The Lord of The Rings and the defeat of the Evil Lord Sauron, Peregrin "Pippin" Took returned home and became instrumental in overthrowing Saruman's forces during the Scouring of the Shire. As he worked to restore his land to its former beauty, Pippin eventually inherited his father's title and became 32nd Thain of the Shire.*

*With the help of our guest "the Kitchen Overlord" (aka Chris Rachael Oseland), the GagMen aimed to create an adventure set during this time period that blended the fun of RPGs with the joys of Shire cooking. In this food themed adventure we have included several recipes for Shire and Middle-earth inspired foods, as well as our traditional wacky story ideas. As always, this adventure was written live on the GagMen RPG Podcast, which you can download and enjoy at [www.GagMen.net](http://www.GagMen.net).*

*This adventure could most certainly be stretched into a full campaign, it was written as a one or two session game, with the intention of being played using Basic Fantasy RPG rules by Chris Gonnerman. But, as is the "GagMen Way (trademark pending)," we encourage you to be a creative and enthusiastic GM; create new content, throw in your own twist or flair, and polish up any parts of the game where you think we took a wrong step. As the GM, YOU are a co-writer, so make it your own!*

*The GagMen have searched encyclopedias, underground tombs, our mothers' closets, the trunk of our cars, and Middle-earth itself, and we still haven't found any hints or tips for Farmville. Please do not touch the GagMen except when invited, shaking hands, being introduced, expressing strong emotion, or giving in to a sudden whim. Downloading the GagMen podcast or the PDF supplements may cause drowsiness, sleeplessness, irritability, joyfulness, and the desire to play a Tabletop RPGs. Please do not expose the GagMen to sunlight, as they operate out of their basements far from the rays of the sun. The following content is for entertainment purposes only, was born from our love of food and Middle-earth, and was only slightly curtailed by our desperate wish not to be sued. The GagMen Wish to thank JRR Tolkien and his family for creating a rich and beautiful world we love to visit, and Chris-Rachael Oseland for adding respectability and delicious recipes to this podcast and adventure.*

## Summary

*Having just received the title of Thain, Perigrin "Pippin" Took has returned to Hobbiton on a tour of the Shire. While the people plan for a grand feast to celebrate his arrival, there are some who hope for an early end to Pippin's rule. Ruby Proudfoot, the celebrated chef, has gathered the original crown jewels of Arnor and baked them into the feast as a surprise for Pippin. When the meal goes missing, however, it's up to our heroes to find the jewels and return them to Pippin, confirming him as the unquestioned ruler of the Shire. The party must hurry if they are to reclaim the jewels however, as five hungry bellies and at least one jealous Uncle awaits their arrival! Can the heroes reclaim the jewels and the food before it's too late? Will Pippin suffer the pains of hunger? Does Shire food leave a stain on your tunic? There are questions that need answering, but one thing is certain, however: somebody is about to receive a Meal fit for a King!*



## Plot

### *Jewel Encrusted Crust*

The Shire has not always existed as an independent territory; generations ago it was under the rule of Arnor, which has long since fell to ruin. Ruby Proudfoot, a renowned local cook and historian, has secretly found and collected the crown jewels from the Royal families of Arnor with the intention of presenting them to Peregrin Took as a way of legitimizing his rule of the Shire. The Jewels will not add to his power, but they will serve as a powerful symbol that the shire is now a nation in its own right.

In preparation for Pippin's visit, Ruby has prepared his favorite dishes and baked the jewels into each dish for him to discover. Even though Ruby had labeled each dish with the Took family crest, her assistant mistakenly sent them to be delivered to their regular dinner customers.

When Ruby discovered the assistant's mistake, she knew immediately that she could not ask for help from within the shire, as Hobbits are legendary gossipers; any shire folk would spread news of the mix up immediately and cause a loss of respect for both Ruby and Pippin.



In order to keep the jewels secret, Ruby seeks out the Player Party to hunt down the dishes and return them before Pippin's feast. The group will be conveniently enjoying lunch in her restaurant, and a waiter will approach the group and ask them to come speak to the chef.

In the Kitchen, Ruby will explain her problem, and will offer the Group ample payment to return the meals. She will provide a map and a list of the recipients, as well as a time limit. The food must be back in time for the feast, or Ruby's plan will be ruined. With that she will shoo them out the door and return to preparations for the feast

### *A pub full of fists*



The first meal was delivered to Gob Transtoff, the innkeeper of the Green Dragon inn of Bywater. The heroes will probably reach Gob in time, but his appetite and excitement for Ruby's cooking will make it hard to convince him to give up the food without a replacement. If the Party tries to take the food by force, the pub's patrons will happily jump in to defend Gob. The inevitable bar fight will attract the attention of the town



guardsmen, who will immediately break up the fight. In the chaos of the fight, the party can try to grab the food and run before the authorities arrive. If this doesn't work, it will be up to them to discover another solution. Once the fight is over, they could try buying Gob a drink. Even though he may be hungry, he's not completely unreasonable.

### *B-I-N-G-O, and Bingo was his name oh*

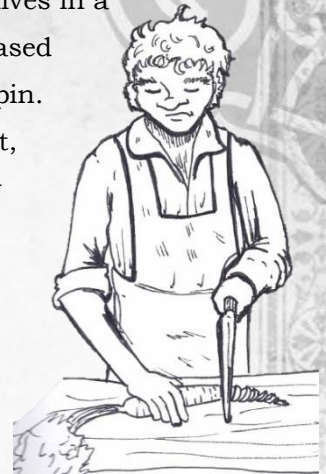
The second meal was delivered to Bingo Knotwise, an old hobbit in the town of Waymeet, along the Great East Road. On their way to his home, the group will find Bingo under attack by a gang of bandits near a small stony bridge. The gang only wants any money Bingo may have on him, they will find little. If the party steps in to defend the old man, the gang will quickly break up and flee. Either way, the bandits will take Bingo's meal sack, forcing the party to follow them. The Gang will attempt to escape by running through the woods. Eventually the Bandits will discover only food in the sack, and throw it aside.

### *A fair trade*

The third meal was delivered to Mungo Gamgee-Took in the village of Tuckburrow. A



wealthy Hobbit, Mungo lives in a "Grand Mansion" purchased by his great nephew Pippin. The house is extravagant, but it was also originally designed for humans, furniture included. Mungo would prefer a house his own size, however he feels obligated to accept the gift. Due to this frustrating situation,



Mungo will be grumpy and ill-tempered when the party arrives to reclaim his food.

After the party fills him in, Mungo will refuse to give up his meal without a substitute. The party may show Mungo they have no food with them, but will point to the fully stocked cupboard and tell them where to find his cookbook: on the top of the tallest shelf in the library. Though the party could just take the food and run, this may not be the best Option; Mungo will be at the feast for Pippin, and you can bet he'll complain about the theft.

If the Heroes decide to cook dinner, it may be smart to divide their efforts. Given the size of the house, this could be a fun opportunity to have a mini-dungeon crawl. Finding the cookbook could require climbing and jumping from shelf to shelf. The pantry could require some clever



navigation to find the right ingredients, and heaven knows what waits for them in the garden! Of course, the race and class of the group will impact this greatly, so customize this section to work best for your group.

### *Goblins just want to have fun*



The fourth meal sack was on its way to Frogmorton when it was intercepted by a band of Goblins operating out of the nearby marsh. The party must venture into the marsh, track down the Goblins, and reclaim the food. When they reach the goblin camp, however, they will find themselves outnumbered nearly two to one!

It will be up to the heroes to devise a plan; the observant player may notice scraps of clothing and armor strewn around the camp, which just might work to make a disguise.

If the players do attempt to disguise themselves, they will need to bluff their way through, as well as create a distraction. Once they have acquired the food sack, the party will need to escape as quickly as possible.

### *Uncle Bulbo*

The fifth and final meal was delivered to Bulbo Proudfoot, Ruby's Uncle,

who claims to have just finished eating the meal before the party arrived. Bulbo will apologize and seem sympathetic, and promise to send the jewels along in a few hours. If the party believes him, they can return to Ruby with what they have. If they grow suspicious, however, Bulbo will summon his henchmen to attack the party as they try to leave. Bulbo has hired a group of sell-swords, and has decided that he will claim the jewels for himself, preventing Pippin from continuing his rule.

### **Conflict**

When Bulbo sat down to his meal he realized immediately what Ruby had done, and that it meant that the jewels had been reassembled. When he saw the party coming, Bulbo quickly hid the food and fed them a story. He will ask the adventurers about their progress so far, and once convinced that they have the remaining jewels, will order his men to hunt the party down. Bulbo dreads the thought of the Shire falling under the rule of a King, and fears that receiving the jewels will turn Pippin into a power mad monarch. "There will be no upstart king to destroy the Shire in my lifetime", Bulbo is likely to say should he be confronted.





### ***Food Fight!***

Bulbo's men will follow the party back to the feast, leisurely if the party is unaware but if the party figures out what Bulbo is up to, the chase is on. If they Bulbo's men are unable to catch up before the dinner begins, they will slip in unnoticed, and will attempt to pick-pocket the jewels from Ruby. Unfortunately, word about the jewel mix-up has been spread around the shire despite her secrecy, and other factions have arrived at the party in the hopes of claiming leadership of the Shire. Among these include a group of Dwarves badly disguised as Hobbits, A dignitary from the Wood Elves, and several Humans from the recently resettled kingdom of Arnor.

Once the group has returned the jewels and food to Ruby, she will ask them to stay and help the party to run smoothly. Meanwhile, trouble is brewing in the dining

hall. The Party, loaded with food, will enter the hall just as Pippin is finishing a speech about the Shire and his Intentions as Thain. As Ruby begins to serve the special plates to Pippin, one of Bulbo's men will take a scoop of food and send it hurling at Pippin's face. With a mighty splat, the shocked and amused Thain will fire back with a scoop from his own plate. At food begins flying, more and more of the dinner guests become involved.

Once the fight has begun, Bulbo's men will duck under the table with plates of ammunition, waiting for a sign of the jewels from Pippin's plate to hit the floor. It's up to the group to subdue the food fighters, find the jewels, and expose the enemy. As this is a public event, and many of the attendees don't fully realize the danger, the party must try to avoid drawing their weapons, which means they better grab a tray of food and start throwing!



*The super happy fun ending*

When the food fight ends, Bulbo and his men should be exposed, covered in food, and defeated, and the jewels should be presented to Pippin, along with the truth. Overcome with Gratitude, Pippin will thank the party and immediately order a second feast to celebrate.





## CHARACTERS



### *Ruby Proudfoot*

(AC 15, Thief 4, #AT 1, Damage Dagger 1d4, Mv 20', MI 9, HP 18)

A renowned chef and historian, Ruby has been running her family bakery for years, while keeping tabs on the slow rise of Arnor since the fall of Sauron. Ruby has slowly collecting the royal jewelry of Arnor over a period of years in the hope of symbolically giving the Shire the right to rule itself. Now with the full collection, she intends to turn them over to the Thain, to help secure his hold over the Shire.

### *Bingo Knotwise*

(AC 11, Fighter 2, #AT 1, Damage Staff (1d6), Mv 20', MI 7, HP 14)

This elderly hobbit survives on the kindness of others, which has made him a little too dependent; as a result he has been known to act a like a spoiled child.

### *Mungo Gamgee-Took*

(AC 13, Fighter 2, #AT 1, Damage hand (1d2), Mv 20', MI 7, HP 12)

The great uncle of the new Thain Peregrin Took, Mungo recently received a human scale house from Pippin. Pippin's loved the grandeur of the house, and because of his travel did not mind the human design. Consequently many of the items in the home are much larger than any normal hobbit would need; several are so big they are impractical to use. Thanks to his nephew's poorly chosen gift, Mungo went from being a contented hobbit to a grumpy curmudgeon. He still enjoys his great nephew, but often questions Pippin's decisions.

### *Bulbo Proudfoot*

(AC 13, Fighter 4, #AT 1, Damage short sword (1d6), Mv 20', MI 7, HP 22)

Uncle to Ruby, Bulbo remembers the stories of the Shire when it was a part the kingdom of Arnor, and wants nothing to do with it. He fears that with the jewels in his possession, Pippin will crown himself king and rule over the shire with an iron fist. To prevent this, Bulbo has hired henchmen to stop the party and retrieve the jewelry.



**Gob Transtoff**

(AC 11, Fighter 2, #AT 1, Damage Staff (1d6), Mv 20', MI 7, HP 14)

The innkeeper of the Green Dragon Inn, Gob is lean for a hobbit but stays busy keeping mead and ale on the tables to make his patrons happy. As a terrible cook, he has always relied on Rubies shop to deliver prepared foods for his guests and himself. He is always delighted to have a meal brought to him and relishes each bite as if it were all he would ever get. Much like a 'dog with a bone', he will defend his own food and is never likely to share.



**Halfling/Hobbit Thugs** (the gang, Bulbo's Henchmen, or another random encounter)

(AC 15, Fighter 2, #AT 1, Damage short sword (1d6), Mv 20', MI 6, HP 13)

**Goblins** (as many as you need)

(AC 16, Fighter 3, #AT 1, Damage club (1d6), Mv 30', MI 7, HP 18)





## Details

When devising this adventure, our original concept included special gems or jewelry that had been cooked into the dishes and the Kitchen Overlord has supplied us with an abundance of recipes that will work and allow you to try out 'real' Shire cooking. Consider yourself encouraged to serve, or at least try out these recipes. That being said, we discourage the idea of trying to actually cook items into your meals that are not edible. Gold, Silver, precious metals, and gems are considered inedible and in some cases could cause incredibly painful bowel movements. Plastic has a high danger of melting into the food, making it taste awful and dangerous to digest. If you are insistent to use real jewelry, a best practice would be to present it to the group after each course is finished. Otherwise, have a fun game and eat well.

Here is a quick list of a list of the hobbit meal plan.

Hobbit Meals (from aboutmiddleearth.com)

7am - Breakfast

9am - Second Breakfast

11am - Elevesens

1pm - Luncheon

4pm - Afternoon Tea

6pm - Dinner

8pm - Supper



### **The Five Recipes** (graciously provided by the Kitchen Overlord)



If you try these out and enjoy them, you should check out the Kitchen Overlord website

(<http://www.kitchenoverlord.com>) and look out for the upcoming book "An Unexpected Cookbook" by Chris-Rachael Oseland. It is up to your group if you want to add food at all to your game, but the Gagmen advise eating and snacking along with the adventure, as it will be a lot more fun.



## Mushroom, Onion and Garlic Hand Pie

### Filling:

1 pound ground beef (or vegan crumbles)  
1 pint mushrooms, minced  
1 large yellow onion, diced  
6 garlic cloves, minced  
1 1/2 teaspoons salt  
1 teaspoon ground black pepper  
3 1/2 teaspoons paprika  
1/3 teaspoon fennel seed  
1 tsp savory (or rubbed sage)

1 tsp rosemary  
1 tbsp. cooking oil

### Crust:

2 1/2 cups flour  
1/3 Cup cold water  
2 sticks room temperature butter  
2 tbsp. sugar  
1 tsp salt  
(Or the vegan pie crust of your choice)  
1 egg for optional egg wash

### FILLING



To make the filling, pour your cooking oil into a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add your minced mushrooms and diced onions. These are very moist foods, so you're going to want to cook out a lot of that out so they won't turn your pie to mush from the inside. Cook for about 10 minutes, stirring often, until the mushrooms are about half their previous volume and the onions start to brown.

Add the garlic, salt, pepper, paprika, fennel, savory, and rosemary. Give it all a good hearty stir and cook for another 2 minutes, or until the garlic barely starts to brown.

If you're making vegan pies, you can either stop now for an all-vegetable filling or add a pound of frozen vegan crumbles and another tablespoon of cooking oil. The crumbles are fully cooked, so you're literally just warming them though and mixing them with the spices.

If you're making the meaty version, slide the mushroom mix out of the pan and let it patiently wait its turn in a nearby bowl. Replace it with the pound of ground beef. Ground pork or mutton are equally acceptable. Whatever meat you use, brown it until it's fully cooked.

You may want to drain the fat, but don't. That precious fluid not only helps bind your ingredients together, but also helps preserve the food over time.

Dump the cooked mushroom mix back in the pan and stir it into the beef until everything is well blended.

Turn off the heat and let the filling cool slightly. This is a good time to make the crust.



## CRUST

A hearty shortcrust pastry is one of the best options for adventurers. They're known to hold up well no matter how many supplies you cram in your pack, it only takes a little to fill you up, and they're just plain delicious.

To make the pastry, start by mixing your flour, sugar and salt. Now add in the room temperature butter. Work it into the flour using your fingers until it magically transforms from a greasy lump into a coarse, gravelly meal. Finally, add the cold water. That should be just enough to bind the meal together into pastry dough.

Knead it a few times then pack it into a disc.

If you're baking for vegans, substitute room temperature coconut oil for the butter and add an extra teaspoon of salt and tablespoon of sugar. Otherwise, treat it the same.

## ASSEMBLY



Lightly flour your work surface. Break off about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the pie dough and roll it out until it's no less than  $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{8}$  inch thick. You really don't want it any thinner.

Remember, these aren't delicate aristocratic nibbles. These are hearty hand pies meant to survive two days in your knapsack. Give them some backbone.

Use a four inch wide cookie cutter to cut out dough discs. I used a hex shaped one. Use whatever you'd like, as long as you are confident you can seal it closed.

Tightly pack about 2 tablespoons of filling in the middle of your bottom crust. Go ahead and use your hands. It's easier. Tightly stretch a second crust on top of it. Use the edge of a fork to crimp the crusts closed. (Or be fancy with your favorite technique. Have fun with it.) Make sure to punch a couple holes in the top for steam to escape.

Arrange your hand pies 1-2 inches apart on a well-greased cookie sheet. If you're not making vegan pies, whisk 1 egg plus 1 tablespoon of water together. Use a pastry brush to paint the tops of your hand pies. If you are using the vegan option, paint the top of the crusts with a thin layer of very cold water.

Either way, bake them at 375F for 35-40 minutes, or until golden brown.





### **Beorn's Honey Cakes**

*1 stick room temperature butter*

*1 ¾ cups all-purpose flour*

*½ cup dried blueberries or currants*

*Zest of 1 lemon*

*1½ tsp baking powder*

*¼ tsp salt*

*¾ cup whole milk*

*1 egg*

*¾ cup honey + ¼ cup honey, reserved*

*10-12 candied almonds for decoration*

*1 tsp vanilla*

Pre-heat your oven to 400F

Mix the butter and flour until you achieve a crumbly meal.

Now add the zest, baking powder, salt, and blueberries or currants. Make sure it's all well blended.

Once your dry ingredients all get along nicely, it's time to introduce them to the wet stuff. Mix in the milk, egg, and ¾ cup honey. Keep mixing until you achieve a dense batter.

Scoop about ⅓ cup of the mix into well-greased cupcake tins. You want to use a generous amount of butter instead of liners. This isn't health food.

Bake for 12 minutes.

Take the cakes out of the oven. They may still be a little runny in the middle. Don't worry. That'll come in handy soon. I used a silicone cupcake pan to make mine easier to remove.

Turn the cupcakes out. Arrange them on a baking sheet.

Gently press a candied almond (or a plain one if you prefer) into the middle of the cupcakes. If this causes a little uncooked dough to erupt, good. That'll help hold the almond in place.

Generously drizzle the rest of your honey on top of the cakes. I just squeezed mine directly from the container. Use enough to coat the top and let it drip down the sides. This creates a nice crispy glaze on your honey cakes.

Let them sit for at least 5 minutes so the honey can soak in.

Put the baking sheet back in the oven for 10-12 minutes, or until the tops are a deep golden honey brown.

While they're still perfectly edible days later, if you find yourself the host of an unexpected party, these honey cakes are quick to make and taste amazing fresh from the oven with a bit of jam and clotted cream.



## Small Adventure Sized Mincemeat Pies

### Filling:

*3 large granny smith apples, peeled and cored*

*1 cup golden raisins*

*½ cup dried figs, chopped*

*¼ cup dried cherries*

*¼ cup dried apricots*

*2 tbsp. crystallized ginger*

*¾ cup brown sugar*

*¼ cup butter or coconut oil (for vegans)*

*1 orange, zested and juiced*

*1 lemon, zested and juiced*

*½ cup spiced rum or brandy*

*1 tsp cinnamon*

*½ tsp nutmeg*

*¼ tsp allspice*

*¼ tsp ground cloves*

Put everything in a food processor and pulse 10-12 times, less if you prefer a coarser mixture.

If you don't have a food processor but do have miraculous patience, you can always chop all the solids very fine by hand then mix them with the liquids.

Either way, let the final result sit in the fridge for at least 3 days. Thanks to the combination of alcohol and refrigeration, the mincemeat should keep for up to 6 months.

### Crust:

*2.5 cups flour*

*½ cup cornmeal*

*¼ cup sugar*

*1 tsp salt*

*2 sticks butter (or ½ cup coconut oil for vegans)*

*¼ cup water*

*¼ cup apple juice*

Mix the flour, cornmeal, sugar and salt until well blended. Add the butter. Use your fingers to really work the butter (or coconut oil) into the flour mix until you have something that looks like edible gravel.

Moisten it up with the water and apple juice. You should end up with dense pastry dough.

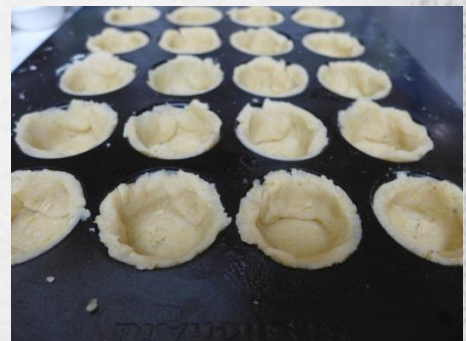
### Assembly:

Spray a mini-cupcake pan with nonstick coating.

Lightly flour your work surface and roll out about ⅛ of the dough. It's easiest if you work in small batches. Aim for a ⅛ – ¼ inch thickness.

You don't want to make it too thin. Remember – this is meant to be hearty traveling food, not a dainty pastry.

Use a round cookie cutter to cut circles from your dough. Tuck them neatly in the mini cupcake tin's holes. Cut away any excess from the





top.



Once you've made all your bottom crusts, fill them about  $\frac{5}{8}$  of the way to the top with your refrigerated mincemeat mix. For me, this meant about 1 tablespoon, but your mileage may vary depending on the size of your mini-cupcake pan.

Roll out the last of your dough. Cut out top crusts for your tiny pies. I used mini cookie cutters with leaves, moons, and apples, but honestly, use whatever you'd like. A simple small circle will do, or a thick X of dough, or whatever tickles your fancy. Just make sure you leave ample room for steam to escape while the pies bake.

Once your pies are filled and topped, pop them in a 400F oven for 18-20 min or until the tops are golden brown. It may be a struggle, but once you remove them from the oven, let them sit for at least 15 minutes to set.



These are delicious hot, but unlike most baked goods, they taste even better the next morning. That makes them great snacks for elevenses when adventuring outside the shire.





### Shire Baked Scotch Eggs

6 hard-boiled eggs

1 raw egg

2 pounds ground beef

3 garlic cloves, minced

1 ½ tbsp. salt + 1 tsp salt

1 tbsp. ground black pepper

3 1/2 tbsp. paprika

1/3 tbsp. fennel seed

1 tbsp. savory (or rubbed sage)

1 tbsp. rosemary

2 cups breadcrumbs\*

Mix the garlic, salt, pepper, paprika, fennel, savory and rosemary.

Add 1 tbsp. of the spice mix plus the extra 1 tsp salt to the breadcrumbs.

Mix the raw egg and the rest of the spice blend into the ground beef to create a sticky dough.



Divide the meat mix into six portions. Flatten them out then wrap the meat tightly around each hard-boiled egg until you have six baseball sized meatwads.

Whisk together the raw egg and 1 tbsp. water.

Set up an assembly station. You want one bowl with the raw egg, another with the seasoned breadcrumbs, and an aluminum

foil lined baking sheet with a meat rack on it at the end.

Roll the meatballs in the beaten egg.

Next roll them in the seasoned breadcrumbs.



Arrange the breaded scotch eggs on the meat rack. This keeps the Scotch Eggs from sitting in their own juices as they bake. If you don't put them on a rack, they'll end up somewhat greasy and the crust will be soggy.

Bake at 375F for 45 minutes, turning every 15 minutes.

If you have a nice pool of seasoned grease beneath your meat rack, go ahead and sop some up with a hunk of crusty bread. It's delicious.

Serve the Scotch Eggs cut in half with a sprinkle of pepper and a dab of hot mustard.

*\* To make these gluten-free, substitute ground, gluten-free cornflakes for breadcrumbs. About 6 cups of cornflakes pulsed in a food processor or blender should give you two cups of crumbs. This won't be entirely true to Tolkien, since new world foods were entirely absent from the Shire. However, the cornmeal crust will*



*play nicely with your digestive system while also resulting in somewhat crunchier baked Scotch Eggs. Everybody wins.*

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### **Porter Cake**

*¾ cup room temperature butter  
1 cup sugar  
3 eggs  
1 orange, juice and zest  
¼ cup candied citrus peel (orange, lemon, or  
a mix)  
¼ cup cherries  
¼ cup currants  
¼ cup sultanas/golden raisins  
¼ cup raisins*

*1 ¼ cups Guinness or other Porter beer  
1 tsp baking powder  
2 ½ cups flour  
1 tsp cinnamon  
½ tsp allspice  
½ tsp nutmeg  
pinch cloves*

### **Topping:**

*¼ cup thin sliced almonds  
⅓ Cup sugar  
2 tbsp. molasses*

If you know you're making a cake tomorrow, soak your assorted dried fruit in half a cup of porter overnight to help plump it back up. Don't stress if you either don't have time or prefer not to waste half a cup of beer. Your cake will be fine if you just toss the fruit right in the batter.

When you're ready to make the cake, start by creaming together your room temperature butter, sugar, and eggs. Add the juice and zest of one orange. You may be thinking this is a good time to add some vanilla. That's not on the ingredient list because Tolkien was pretty hardcore about keeping new world foods out of the Shire – and honestly, it wasn't anywhere near as ubiquitous in Victorian cooking outside his sleepy village as it is today.

In another bowl, mix your flour, baking powder, and two teaspoons of holiday spices. I used cinnamon, allspice, nutmeg, and a pinch of cloves, but if you're not a stickler for historical accuracy, you can also try either 2 teaspoons of pumpkin pie spice or 1 teaspoon of cinnamon and 1 teaspoon of gram masala. Use what you have on hand. A good country cook wouldn't send out for something special just to make this easy cake.

Roll your moist fruit in the flour mix. If you can get a nice coating of flour on it, that will help keep the fruit from sinking to the bottom of the cake while it bakes.

Once your fruit is all floured up, introduce the flour mix to the butter mix. Take them on a nice little dance around your bowl until they're all mixed up. Once they're happily confused, pour on a little beer. Nah, heck, you want these ingredients to party. Pour in all the beer. Keep mixing until the foam dies down.



Lube up a couple of 9 inch cake pans. I went square with mine for easy packability, but you're just as welcome to use round pans. (If you prefer, you can bake this in two 1-pound loaf pans instead. It's fine either way.) Be generous with the butter. This isn't health food. Pour your batter into the buttery pans and give them a nice shake to help smooth out the crust.

To make the topping, mix your sugar and molasses until it looks just like brown sugar. (If you're in the United States, you can just use ½ cup brown sugar instead.) Sprinkle the sugar evenly over your cakes. Now sprinkle the thin, flaked almond slices on top of the sugar. Use your fingers to gently press the almonds into the batter. This will help prevent them from escaping when you slice the cake. Bake at 325F for 45-50 minutes, or until the crust is a dark, crunchy brown and a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean.

You'll end up with an incredibly moist, dense cake that has as much in common with a modern fruitcake as a slow baked Sunday chicken does with drive-through nuggets. It's time travel for your taste buds.

## Acknowledgements and Special Thanks

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*Having just received the title of Thain, Perigrin "Pippin" Took has returned to Hobbiton on a tour of the Shire. While the people plan for a grand feast to celebrate his arrival, there are some who hope for an early end to Pippin's rule. Ruby Proudfoot, the celebrated chef, has gathered the original crown jewels of Arnor and baked them into the feast as a surprise for Pippin. When the meal goes missing, however, it's up to our heroes to find the jewels and return them to Pippin, confirming him as the unquestioned ruler of the Shire. The party must hurry if they are to reclaim the jewels, as five hungry bellies and at least one jealous Uncle await their arrival! Can the heroes reclaim the jewels and the food before it's too late? Will Pippin suffer the pains of hunger? Does Shire food leave a stain on your tunic? There are questions that need answering, but one thing is certain: somebody is about to receive a Meal fit for a King!*

