

# Love Feast

---

Crumbs, coffee, sugar, bread, milk, mugs, chewing, slurping, singing, spilling, visiting, laughing, feasting. The Love Feast, a ritual meal based on the ancient Christian agape meal, occurs several times a year during Moravian worship. While the Eucharist, the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, focuses on the relationship between God and humans, celebrating our redemption in Christ and Christ's presence in our lives, the Moravian Love Feast continues the Eucharistic blessing and celebration by connecting humans with each other so that for a few minutes, we may see Christ in each other—even the dirty, difficult other. The other who is spewing curse words. The other who is sitting in a

wheelchair. The other who is crying. The other who is laughing. The other who is myself.

While the organist plays hymns, such as *Morning Star*, *O Cheering Sight*, for the choir and the congregation to sing, the Dieners, or corps of servers, distribute the sweet buns and coffee to everyone in the congregation. Made with mashed potatoes, flour, sugar, lemon juice, lemon and orange zests, the Love Feast bun is a cross between a sweet roll and a hamburger bun. The coffee, served in narrow white mugs, is about two-thirds sugar and milk. After everyone is served, all pray the Moravian grace: *Come, Lord Jesus, our guest to be /and bless these gifts bestowed by Thee. Amen.* Following the blessing, the feasting begins. Everyone remains seated to avoid chaos, but it is a time for sharing food and conversation with your neighbor. A way to bring together the sacred of God with the earthly pleasures of humanity. A symbol of the bounteous hospitality of God and the infinite possibilities for our own hospitality toward others.

When I was fifteen years old, I sat in a wooden pew of the Home Moravian Church, established in 1771, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and

## « LOVE FEAST »

looked at the round sugary bun I held in one hand and the white mug of sugary, milky coffee in the other. I didn't know what to do with either because this was my first time in a Moravian Church. Having grown up in a straight-laced Southern Presbyterian church, I knew I was breaking at least one God-rule, if not several. Church was no place for messes, talking, spilling, sugar, laughter, food, noise, movement, enjoyment.

I didn't know then that the Love Feast would become a metaphor in my life but I knew from that day those two words belonged together. Over time I came to understand that this feast of love was the whole point of the spiritual journey. God, instead of being separate or distant from our unkempt, needy, imperfect selves, is right there beside us, holding the napkin, wiping our chins, tearing off bites of bread, moving us forward into the world.

## Moravian Love Feast Bun Recipe

*Adapted from Winkler Bakery Recipe*

Winkler is the original Moravian bakery still in operation, in Old Salem, North Carolina, since 1800. Bakers still use the wood stove for all their baking.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup hot mashed potatoes, unseasoned,  
without milk or butter**
- 1/2 cup scalded milk**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 1/2 cup butter, room temperature**
- 2 eggs, beaten**
- 1 1/2 pounds flour**
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg**
- 2 packages yeast**
- 1/2 cup warm water**
- 2 Tbsps. orange rind, grated**
- 2 Tbsps. lemon rind, grated**
- 2 Tbsps. orange juice**
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice**
- 1/2 tsp. mace**

## « LOVE FEAST »

### DIRECTIONS

1. Cream butter and sugar; add potatoes, mix well. Add lukewarm milk, then eggs, mix well.
2. Dissolve yeast in warm water and add to mixture.
3. Combine seasonings and rind. Add enough flour to make a soft dough.
4. Knead on a well-floured surface. Form into ball, place in a greased bowl. Cover with a cloth and let rise in a warm place until double in size.
5. Punch down; let rise again five to ten minutes. Flouring hands well (dough will be sticky) form in to small balls (about three ounces).
6. Place on a cookie sheet. Slash tops with a knife (to release air). Cover. Let rise until double in size.
7. Bake at 350 degrees till golden brown all over (15 to 20 minutes).

*Makes about thirty love buns.*