

NOVEMBER 5th GUY FAWKES DAY BONFIRE NIGHT

Guy Fawkes day, celebrated every year in Britain sees bonfires, fireworks, feasting, and general fun, however a very gory story lies behind all the merry-making.

Elizabeth I, a Protestant Queen, had passed several laws that were deemed unfair by a certain number of Catholics. When James I succeeded to the throne in the 16th century, even more 'anti-Catholic' laws were passed and a small group of Catholics, outraged by the bad treatment inflicted upon them decided to take things into their own hands.



Guy Fawkes and his friends are said to have wanted to blow up the Houses of Parliament on November 5th, 1605. Why this date? Because this was the opening of Parliament. Today however, research has shown that Guy Fawkes and his mates probably only really wanted to kill the King (a heinous enough crime) and didn't intend to blow up the entire building. You will notice that Guy Fawkes is referred to as Guido Fawkes; he was British, but having lived on the continent for a few years, and even served in the Spanish army, he liked to be called Guido.

Guy Fawkes and his comrades were betrayed, caught, arrested and imprisoned in the notorious Tower of London. King James might have requested that 'gentler tortours' be inflicted upon the traitors to the Crown - Fawkes was still put on the rack, and pulled in all directions until almost every bone in his body had been dislocated. He was then condemned to be hung, drawn and quartered before going to the stake.



All British school children learn, skip to and chant this nursery rhyme!

Remember, remember the fifth of November,
Gunpowder treason and plot.
We see no reason
Why gunpowder treason
Should ever be forgot!

Understandably relieved that all had been discovered in time King James I ordered that henceforth November 5th be a holiday, to commemorate the foiled Gunpowder Plot and that it be celebrated with bonfires and fireworks. It remained a national holiday until 1859. Even today, children make "Guys" (generally old clothes stuffed with straw), put them on the top of a large bonfire and set the pyre to burning. Fireworks are also still very much the thing - bangers, Catherine wheels, rockets - for fun and excitement.



In these our affluent and dangerous times, one tradition seems to have fallen by the wayside : 'a penny for the guy'. Children used to make a Guy, and then parade it around the village or town, (unaccompanied by adults) knocking on doors to ask for a penny for their guy. Once they had collected enough money, they would go and purchase fireworks for the evening, to accompany the burning of their Guy.



There is always a very festive atmosphere, and special food and drink are very much the thing. Hot soups, bangers and mash (sausages and mashed potatoes), jacket potatoes cooked in the embers... One of the sweets is Treacle (or Bonfire) Toffee (to stick the jaws shut so as presumably not to give ones fellow-evil-doers away, even under torture...)

Ingredients:

900g light brown soft sugar	300ml water
1/2 teaspoon cream of tartar	250g black treacle
150g unsalted butter	150g golden syrup

Prep: 5 mins | Cook: 30 mins | Extra time: 25 mins

1. Grease and line an 18cm sandwich tin with greaseproof paper.
2. In a large, heavy saucepan, add the sugar and water. Heat on medium until the sugar has dissolved, but do not stir. Add the remaining ingredients all at once, stirring once, and bring to the boil.
3. Whilst boiling, brush the inside edge of the pan with water to avoid crystals forming (which will ruin the entire batch!). Using a sugar thermometer, boil to the soft crack stage (132-143 C).
4. Once your Bonfire toffee is at the soft crack stage, remove from heat and carefully pour into the prepared tin. Allow to cool slightly, then mark squares into the toffee with a greased knife. Allow to cool completely at room temperature, then break into squares and store in an airtight container.