

The Wee Bannock

You will have heard the story of the Gingerbread Man who sang 'Run, run as fast as you can. You can't catch me I'm the Gingerbread Man.' This story is told in many cultures, with the runaway being a different foodstuff everywhere it is told. This is a Scottish version and features a wee bannock. You could make your own version of this story and base it on your own locality using well-known people and places.

There was once an old man and an old woman who lived in a small cottage by the side of a burn. They were rather poor and didn't have much, but they were quite content because they had a cow which gave them milk and hens which gave them lovely brown eggs, so they never went hungry.

One day, the old woman was baking in her kitchen, waiting for the old man to come in from making the hay. She had made two round oatmeal bannocks, a big one and a wee one and they were toasting by the fire. The old man was really hungry, saw the large bannock and said,

'Mm, this looks good.'

He picked up the bannock, broke it in two and began to eat it. The wee bannock didn't like that at all.

'What if that should happen to me?' it thought and decided to run away before it did. It jumped down from the hearth, bowled under the table and out through the door of the cottage.

'Gracious me!' cried the old woman, 'Look at yon Wee Bannock, it's running away! After it Jock, after it. Catch it! Catch it!' The old man and the old woman chased the Wee Bannock down the garden path, but they were old and it was young and it was far too fast for them. It ran and ran and ran until it came to the next house where it thought it would be safe and warm.

In the next house lived a tailor and his wife. He had a big pressing-iron in his hand and she was making porridge at the fire when the Wee Bannock ran straight into the kitchen.

'Hey, I see a Wee Bannock', shouted the tailor. 'Catch it wife, catch it. It'll make a fine supper.' She threw her porridge spurtle at it, but missed and hit her husband instead. He threw the iron, but he missed too and it fell on his wife's foot.

'You idiot!' she cried, 'after the bannock, catch it, catch it.'

But they were so busy shouting at each other that the Wee Bannock birlled round and round, under their feet and away out of the door to the next house where a woman was turning the handle of a churn to make butter.

'A Wee Bannock,' she said, 'that'll be just the thing to go with this butter.' She put out her hand to try to catch it, but the bannock jiggled this way and that, running under her feet and almost tripping her up. 'Ye wee divvil,' she shouted, and threw her shoe at it, but it missed and the Wee Bannock spun out of the door and down the road until it came to the mill where the miller was filling up sacks with flour.

'Well I never!' said the miller, 'a Wee Bannock. That's good luck and it will be just fine with a mug of ale for my supper.' He made a grab, but the Wee Bannock was too quick for him and it dodged under the sack and over the mill stone. The miller threw his cap at it but that Wee Bannock turned this way and that until it reached the door and it was away out and down the hill to the next house which was a farm.

'I'll be safe and snug here,' it thought. Three men were sitting round a fire talking to the farmer and his wife and they were all supping a mug of ale.

'There's a Wee Bannock!' said one.

'Just the thing to go with this beer,' said another

'After it,' said the third. 'Catch it, catch it.'

So the farmer and his wife and the three men all tried to catch the Wee Bannock, but it was too quick for them. You should have seen it dodge in between their legs and the legs of all the furniture. They were soon falling all over the place, but the Wee Bannock thought, 'Dear me, this is not the place for me.' And it raced over to the door and out of the house without a backward glance.

It was getting quite dark now and at the next house it came to, a man and his wife were getting ready for bed. The man had just taken off his trousers when the Wee Bannock raced in.

'A bannock! A bannock!' shouted the man. 'Catch it wife, catch it. That supper you gave me was gey small and that Wee Bannock would be just the thing to fill the empty space in my stomach.' The wife threw first one shoe and then the other at the Wee Bannock, but she missed.

'Oh catch it yourself,' she cried and flung the pillow which burst. There were feathers all over the room so they could scarcely see and making them cough and sneeze. The Wee Bannock ran out of the door, chased down the street by the man wearing no trousers. He had his trousers in his hand and he threw them down on top of the Wee Bannock.

'I've caught it,' he said. But the Wee Bannock wriggled and jiggled and managed to escape from under the trousers. The man had to go back home half naked, feeling rather silly.

It was dark now and the Wee Bannock was feeling very tired with all the running and jiggling and dodging and it saw a nice, cosy fox's hole under a whin bush. It was warm and empty and the wee bannock fell fast asleep. But the fox had been out hunting and he hadn't caught anything. When he came home hungry, he was very pleased to find a nice Wee Bannock waiting for him.

'What a lovely supper,' he said and he gobbled it up on one big bite. And that was the end of the Wee Bannock!

As told by Bea Ferguson