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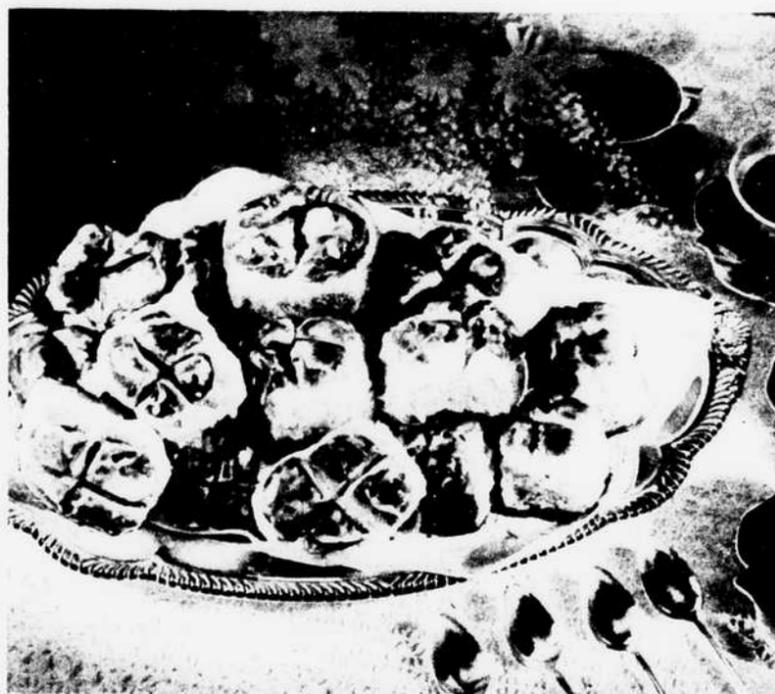
Hot Cross Buns For Easter

BY CLEMENTINE PADDLEFORD

The moon is responsible for those spicy Lenten cakes. They were first baked in her honor...

THANK the moon for the hot cross bun. Thank Selene, the moon goddess of strong wings, wearer of the golden diadem, who, in centuries past, rode the skies in a chariot drawn by white oxen, their horns a counterpart of the moon's crescent. Selene was quite a girl in her time, beloved by many peoples, known by many names. The Romans called her Luna, again they would speak of her as Noctiluca, the "bright by night." But throughout Italy she was generally known as Diana. In Phoenicia the moon goddess was known as Astarte and in Babylonia she was usually called Ishtar.

Her worshippers could be numbered by the tens of thousands. On the special days set aside for her honor — the days of the new and the full moon — her followers baked moon cakes to bring to her temples, these imprinted with the oxen's crossed horns. They called the little cakes bon, meaning ox,



GOOD FRIDAY has become the special day to eat them

later the name became boun, still later, bun.

The Greeks baked similar cakes to honor the goddess but stylized them with crosses either as an allusion to the four phases of the moon or for easy breaking when

offered as a sacrifice. Early Saxons, too, ate cross bread in honor of their goddess of light. The Mexicans and the Peruvians had a similar custom but which goddess they honored, history hasn't been able to tell us.

The early Christians tried hard to abolish this custom of baking cakes for pagan gods. But those who joined the new faith were devoted to their festivals and clung to them.

Gradually the Christians took over the most alluring of the pagan customs and gave them new meanings. The mark of the cross on the bun no longer symbolized horns but became a sign of Christian faith. In the medieval church, buns were made of the dough for the consecrated Host and were distributed to communicants after Easter Mass. The making of the buns was a rite that belonged exclusively to the church.

Ban Was Removed

BUT in England, as far back as 1252, bakeries began baking the buns in commercial competition and stamping the bread with cross lines. A forbidden practice, yet these unhallowed buns sold like hot cakes. Housewives, too, began to bake the buns for private consumption. With the rise of Protestantism, the ban against cross-bun baking was removed and the bun was no longer holy bread. But the world loved this spicy sweet and has continued by centuries of habit to eat it every Good Friday.

Bakers vied with each other in bringing the Lenten bread to its most delectable perfection. About a century ago in England the popularity of the cross bun had reached

CHARLIE McCarthy
Butts in

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