

HOLIDAY FRUITCAKE



Believe it or not there are devoted fruitcake enthusiasts, including me! If you're not one already, try this recipe and you may find yourself a convert. The recipe is not overly complicated, but it does require a three hour slow bake at a low oven temperature to evaporate the moisture and bring the loaf together. Then to cure the cake properly, you give it a splash of brandy once a week. The earlier you make this, the more brandy you can bathe your cakes in. I recommend three weeks for the cake to be amply soaked. I use dried fruit as opposed to the glacé fruit (candied fruit) you commonly find in fruitcake recipes. I hope traditionalists aren't offended, but I prefer the flavor and texture it gives.

- Leslie Mackie

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup + 2 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour	1/2 cup + 1 tablespoon brown sugar
1/4 teaspoon baking powder	3 eggs
3/4 teaspoon ground cloves	1 tablespoon + 1/2 teaspoon fresh ginger, finely chopped
2-1/4 teaspoons ground cinnamon	1 tablespoon + 1/2 teaspoon fresh lemon zest
1 cup dried cherries	1-1/2 cups golden raisins
1/2 cup pure vanilla extract	1-1/2 cups candied orange
1-1/2 cups brandy, divided	1-1/4 cups pecans, toasted and chopped
1 cup dried apricots	1-1/4 cups walnuts, toasted and chopped
1 cup dates	
4 ounces unsalted butter (1 stick)	

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 250°F. Oil two loaf pans (9" x 4" x 5") and line with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, cloves and cinnamon. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, soak the dried cherries in the vanilla extract and 1/2 cup of the brandy until plump, at least 15 minutes.

In the bowl of a food processor, add the dried apricots, dates and flour mixture and chop for one minute.

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the butter and brown sugar. Cream for 2-3 minutes. Add the eggs one at a time, allowing each to fully incorporate before adding the next. Scrape down the bowl after each addition. Add the fresh ginger and lemon zest and mix for 30 more seconds. Add the apricot-date-flour mixture in two additions. Remove bowl from mixer and add the plumped cherries and juices, raisins, candied orange, pecans and walnuts. Mix by hand with a spatula until well blended.

Divide batter evenly into prepared loaf pans and smooth the tops with an offset spatula. Bake for three hours until the tops are golden brown and firm to the touch.

Allow loaves to cool for 30 minutes. Remove from pan and peel off the parchment paper. Brush with remaining cup of brandy while they're still warm. When cakes are completely cool, wrap in plastic and store in refrigerator for up to three weeks. To aid in the maturation of flavor, brush the cakes each week with additional brandy (or use any remaining brandy from the first brushing). Serve thin slices with your favorite vanilla ice cream or sweetened whipped cream and coffee. Enjoy!