

Christmas Cake

Makes one 23 x 23 cm cake



INGREDIENTS

1 ½ cups dried mixed fruit
1 cup currants
1 cup sultanas
½ cup dried cranberries
½ cup chopped mixed peel
1 cup orange juice
1 cup water
¾ cup brandy or dark rum
1 ½ cups brown sugar
⅓ cup blackstrap molasses
200 ml New Zealand Extra Virgin Olive Oil *
¼ cup chopped glacé cherries (optional)

Zest 1 lemon, finely grated
Zest 1 orange, finely grated
1 cup chopped toasted nuts e.g. walnuts, pecans, almonds, Brazil nuts
4 eggs
2 tsp vanilla extract
½ tsp almond essence (optional)
3 ½ cups plain flour
3 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
Blanched almonds to decorate
Additional ¼ - ⅓ cup brandy or dark rum to finish

PREPARATION

Place dried fruit, mixed peel, orange juice, water and brandy or rum in a small pot and bring to a boil. Simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Remove from heat and stir in sugar and molasses until sugar has dissolved.

Stir in olive oil, glacé cherries, zests and nuts and set aside to cool to room temperature.

Preheat oven to 170 °C. Grease a 23 x 23 cm cake tin and line with baking paper ensuring the paper comes 5 cm up over the edge of the tin (this helps prevent the top of the cake from overbrowning).

Place cooled fruit in a large bowl and add eggs one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Stir in vanilla extract and almond essence then fold in flour, baking powder and salt.

Spoon batter into prepared tin and level out. Gently press blanched almonds into the top in a decorative pattern.

Bake for 1 ¼ to 1 ½ hours or until a skewer inserted in the middle comes out with just a few crumbs. Watch carefully after the 1 hour mark to make sure the top isn't over browning and cover loosely with a piece of tin foil if it is.

Once cake is cooked, drizzle brandy or rum evenly all over – it will sizzle and soak in.

Cool in the tin for 30 minutes before turning out onto wire rack to cool completely. Store in an airtight container for up to four weeks.

Baker's note: Storing and "feeding" your cake

If you want to store it for longer (to "mature" the cake) wrap the completely cooled cake in a double layer of baking paper then in thoroughly in plastic wrap ensuring that there are no gaps for air to get in. Finally wrap the cake in newspaper or tin foil (to keep the light out) and store in a cool place for up to three months. If you want to "feed" the cake more brandy or rum, brush over a ¼ cup every three or four weeks, alternating between brushing the top and bottom. Make sure you rewrap the cake very well after each feed.

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* Try 50/50 with a flavoured olive oil such as citrus or aromatic. Very tasty and you won't need the zest.