



Ingredients

Serves 10–12

Preparation time 1 hour plus overnight soaking

Cooking time 2 hours 30 minutes–3 hours

- 700g mixed dried fruit (raisins, sultanas and currants)
- 50g candied peel, chopped
- 50g glacé cherries, halved
- 115g flaked almonds
- 60ml each brandy and sweet sherry
- finely grated zest of 1 lemon
- 160g softened unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing
- 160g soft brown sugar
- 1 tbsp black treacle or molasses
- 3 medium eggs
- 3 tbsp milk
- pinch salt
- ½ tsp ground mace
- ½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- ½ tsp mixed spice
- 200g sifted plain flour

special equipment

a deep 17cm round cake tin

Mrs Beeton: How to Cook

Rich Fruit Cake

Mrs Beeton provided several recipes for fruit cakes, offering a different one for each occasion – among them a treacle-rich Christmas cake and a 'Bride or Christening' cake, both of which are quite different from the fruit cakes we are used to eating today. This rich fruit cake has been pared back to provide you with a basic recipe that can be spiced or altered to suit your own taste or the occasion. It is fruit-heavy and delicious. Like most rich fruit cakes, it benefits from being made a month or two before you intend to use it.

Combine the dried fruit, peel, cherries, almonds, sherry and brandy in a large bowl. Stir, cover and leave overnight.

The next day, add the lemon zest to the fruit and stir well. Preheat the oven to 140C/gas mark 1. Line a baking tray with a double layer of foil. Grease the tin and line the base and sides with non-stick baking paper. Secure a sheet of newspaper around the outside of the tin with a paperclip.

In a large bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in the treacle or molasses. Beat the eggs and milk together and add to the butter mixture in 3–4 batches, beating well between each addition. Now sift together the salt, spices and flour and fold them into the mixture until just combined. Add the fruit and stir to distribute it evenly through the batter, then transfer the batter to the tin. Make a shallow depression in the middle.

Place the tin on the baking tray and cover with a sheet of foil, tucking it under the tin to keep it in place. Bake in the centre of the oven for 2 ½ hours, turning every 30 minutes, then check to see if the cake is cooked by inserting a skewer into the middle. If it comes out clean, the cake is done. If not, reduce the oven temperature to 130C/gas mark 1/2 and retest after 30 minutes.

Cool the cake overnight in the tin, then carefully turn it out, leaving the baking paper in place, and store in an airtight container for a month or so before using. If you like, you can feed it every week for 3–4 weeks with 2–3 tbsp brandy. Simply drizzle the brandy onto the surface and let it soak in.



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