

Traditional British Christmas Cake

Ingredients:

- 3 c dried currants
- 2 ½ c sultanas (golden raisins)
- 1 ½ c raisins
- 2 ½ c glace cherries (red & green candied cherries)
- ½ c brandy or sherry
- 1 ¼ c butter (salted - softened, at room temperature)
- 1 ¼ c light brown sugar
- 4 large eggs (room temperature)
- 1 tablespoon molasses
- 3 oz almonds (chopped)
- 1 zest from one large orange
- 1 zest from one large lemon
- 2 ¼ c all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoon British mixed spice blend (see recipe)

Covering

- 2 tablespoon apricot preserves
- 1 tablespoon warm water
- 1 ½ lb marzipan

Royal Icing

- 3 large egg whites (use the best, fresh eggs available)
- 6 c confectioners sugar (sifted)
- ¼ teaspoon cream of tartar (sifted w confectioners sugar)
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice of half a large lemon (fresh, squeezed)

Directions:

In a medium bowl, combine all of the fruit (after rinsing). Pour brandy or sherry over, and top off with additional orange juice if desired. Cover with plastic wrap and allow to soak overnight (at least) and preferably for 2 to 3 days, stirring daily.

Preheat your oven to 275 degrees F (135 degrees C) and line a 9 inch round pan (springform or cake pan, with at least 2 inch high sides) with a double layer of parchment paper. *Cut out two rounds of parchment paper, place in the bottom of pan. Cut two long strips from parchment paper about the same width as your baking pan is in height and fit both layers on the inside rim of your baking pan.

In a very large mixing bowl, preferably one that fits a stand mixer, cream the butter and brown sugar together until light, fluffy, and light in color. Add eggs, molasses, add orange and lemon zest, and mixed spice. Mix until well combined. Add flour and mix until flour is incorporated, then fold in fruit mixture (soaked and drained). Transfer batter to lined cake pan, level the top of the batter with a slightly concave surface to prevent the cake from forming a small dome.

Bake at 275 degrees F (135 degrees C) in the center of oven, for about 4 to 4 ½ hours. Check the cake half way through baking to see how the top of the cake looks, cover with aluminum foil to prevent burning, if necessary. Cake is done when an inserted skewer comes out clean.



Remove the cake and allow to cool on a wire rack in the cake pan until cooled. Once cooled, remove from the pan and allow to cool completely on the wire rack. Before storing, use a fine skewer to poke holes intermittently throughout the cake surface to feed brandy or sherry (2 - 3 tablespoon at a time) to the cake.

Cover with a double layer of parchment paper, then wrap in aluminum foil to store in a cool place until ready to cover and apply icing before serving (up to 3 months for feeding the brandy or sherry to the cake). *Keep the parchment paper in place between feedings, as it will help to keep the cake moist.

When ready to serve the cake, allow three days to cover with marzipan (similar to fondant, made using almond paste) and apply the royal icing.

Covering your Traditional British Christmas Cake

To cover the Christmas Cake, turn the cake upside down so that the flat side up is facing upward. Combine the apricot preserves and warm water, stir to thin and sieve through a fine sieve or cheesecloth. Use the remaining mix to coat the bottom and sides of the cake.

Use confectioners' sugar to coat a working surface and roll out marzipan with 2 additional inches than the cake width (9 inch baking pan + 2 inches to cover the cake sides).

Roll marzipan layer up on your rolling pin and transfer to cover the cake. Use your rolling pin to level and smooth the top of the cake and marzipan, then work to smooth the sides of the cake. Your marzipan should cover the cake completely, use a sharp knife to trim any excess marzipan away from the bottom of the covered cake.

Cover the cake again with parchment paper and allow the marzipan to set up (it will dry out a bit) for a few days before spreading the royal icing and finishing the cake decorating.

Royal Icing

Using a large bowl, or the bowl of your stand mixer, whisk the egg whites until frothy and foamy. Add sifted confectioners' sugar with cream of tartar to the whisked egg whites gradually, adding 1-2 tablespoon at a time on a low setting.

While still on a low speed, drizzle in the lemon juice and then beat until stiff peaks are formed and you have a thick and glossy royal icing.

Transfer royal icing to the top of your Christmas Cake and spread out over the surface and sides evenly if desired, or use an offset spatula to form roughed up peaks for a textured finish.

Allow the royal icing to form a skin (will not transfer to your finger when touched), then cover loosely with plastic wrap until ready to serve. *I like candied orange peel added to my mixed spice blend, and that is what is used here on my Christmas Cake for garnish.