

Fruitcakes full of cheer

See Chef Larry Janes' Taste Buds column on front.

CHOCOLATE FRUITCAKE

1/2 cup chopped dried figs
1/2 cup chopped dried apricots
1/2 cup dried cherries
1/2 cup golden raisins
1/4 cup Grand Marnier liqueur
1/4 cup cognac, plus additional cognac for aging the cake, if desired
1/2 cup unbleached all purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
3 ounces unsweetened chocolate
1 stick (1/4 pound) unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
3 large eggs, room temperature

In a small bowl, combine the dried fruits with the and Marnier and cognac. Cover and allow the fruit to macerate for overnight, stirring once or twice. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Prepare three mini loaf pans or one 9X5X3 inch loaf pan. Coat the insides with butter and then line the sides and bottom with parchment paper. In a small bowl, whisk together the flour and the baking powder. Melt the chocolate in the top of a double boiler set over barely simmering water. When almost melted, remove from heat and stir until completely melted. Set aside.

In the bowl of an electric mixer, beat the butter and the sugar together until light and fluffy. Beat in the melted chocolate until completely blended. Scrape down the sides of the bowl, then beat in the eggs, one at a time, until completely blended. With mixer on low speed, blend in the flour, then the fruit and the liquor. Spoon the batter into the prepared pans and bake for 1 hour or until wooden skewer inserted in the center comes out just slightly moist. Remove pans from oven and allow cakes to cool on a rack in the pans until cool.

Remove from pans, peel off parchment paper. Moisten a double layer of cheesecloth with cognac and wrap around the cakes. Wrap tightly in plastic wrap or a heavy duty storage bag. Store cakes in a cool spot. Check cakes weekly and brush with more cognac if cheesecloth has dried. Yield: 1 large

or 3 small fruitcakes.

Recipe from: "Baking for Christmas" by Maria Robbins. (Copyright 1995, St. Martin's Griffin Publishers, \$5.95.)

IRISH GUINNESS FRUITCAKE

1 cup dark raisins
1/2 cup golden raisins
2 cups Guinness stout or porter
1 1/4 cups unbleached all purpose flour
1 cup cake flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon fresh grated nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1 stick (1/4 pound) unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup tightly packed dark brown sugar
3 large eggs, lightly beaten
The grated rind of 1 orange
1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Soak the raisins in the stout or the porter overnight. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F. Butter the sides and bottom of an 8-inch round cake pan, line the bottom with a round of parchment paper and then butter the parchment.

In a medium sized bowl of an electric mixer, cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, until each is well blended in. With the mixer on low speed, gradually stir in the flour mixture and orange rind. Drain the raisins, reserving the beer and fold in the raisins and walnuts. Turn the batter into the prepared cake pan and bake for 1 hour. Turn oven heat down to 300 degrees and bake for 1 hour longer or until a wooden skewer inserted into the center comes out clean. Remove cake from the oven and place on a wire rack to cool in the pan.

When cake has cooled, turn it out of the pan, peel away the parchment paper and pierce holes all around the bottom of the cake with a skewer. Pour one cup of the reserved beer into the pierced cake. Soak a double layer of cheesecloth in remaining beer and wrap around the cake. Store in plastic container with a tight fitting lid in a cool place for 2 weeks before using. Can be frozen for up to 2 months. Yield: 1 cake.

Recipe from: "British Cookery" by Jane Grigson, (copyright 1985 Anthemum publishers, \$18.95).

FOGY ALMOND CHRISTMAS CAKE

1 1/2 cups dried figs, stemmed and chopped
1/2 cup orange juice
1/2 cup ground almonds
1 1/2 cups unbleached all purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 1/2 sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, room temperature
3/4 cup granulated sugar
3 large eggs, lightly beaten
Grated zest of 1 orange
1/2 cup sliced almonds for finishing the cake
1/2 cup orange juice
1/2 cup granulated sugar

In a small bowl, combine the figs with the orange juice and set aside. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Butter an 8-cup ring mold or Kugelhopf mold and sprinkle with the ground almonds. In a small bowl, whisk together the flour and the baking powder. In the bowl of an electric mixer, cream the butter and the sugar until light and fluffy.

Beat in the eggs, one at a time, and continue beating until the mixture becomes very pale. Beat in the orange zest. With mixer speed on low, gradually add the flour mixture until just blended.

Finally, stir in the figs, orange juice and sliced almonds. Turn the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 40-45 minutes or until a wooden skewer inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove pan from oven and allow cake to cool in the pan on a rack for 10 minutes. Remove cake to a wire rack to cool completely.

In a small saucepan, bring the orange juice and sugar to a boil over medium heat. Remove from heat and stir with a wooden spoon until the sugar is completely dissolved. Pierce the top of the cake all over with a skewer and spoon the warm syrup over the cake. When cake has absorbed the liquid, wrap cake in plastic or foil and store in a cool place for up to 2 weeks or freeze for up to 3 months. Yield: 1 cake.

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