



בשול עם שמחה



Quick Fruit-and-Spice Cake

The origin of this recipe is 'blackberry jam spice cake' in David Burton's excellent book **Delectable Fruits Cookery**. Halfway between sponge and sour cream dessert cake, moist and warmly spicy - I'd challenge anyone to be near a kitchen where this cake is baking - and not want to try some.... With seasonal changes in fruit and nuts, it has quickly become my favourite recipe for a tasty cake in a hurry.

I find this very moist cake tends to sink a little in the centre. It doesn't bother me, but if you want it to look perfect, bake in a non-stick ring-pan.

Use fresh spices if possible. If your powdered cinnamon is not quite fresh, you could increase to 2-1/2 tsp. But don't put in more than 1/2 level tsp of ground nutmeg - this is a delicious balance of spices, and easily

overbalanced by too much nutmeg. Also, fresh walnuts should taste mild and slightly sweet. If you can only get old stored ones, which are beginning to taste bitter - they will spoil a good cake. Use pecans or hazelnuts or almonds instead.

If you want a cake without butter or sugar, you could probably substitute low-cholesterol spread for the butter, and 3/4 cup plus a separate 1/2 cup of melted strong-flavoured honey for the sugar and the fruit jam, and use a big handful of chopped walnuts or pecans at the end with the second lot of honey.

The recipe doesn't seem to be picky about flour: I have used 50/50 bread and self-raising flour, or organic unbleached white, with very similar results.

Anyway, here's my basic version...

Ingredients:

- 150 gm butter
- 1 cup soft brown sugar
- 1-1/2 cups flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground allspice
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp ground ginger
- 2 small eggs
- 2 to 3 TBS milk - (depending on flour type)
- 3 heaped TBS 'lite' sour cream
- A handful of freshly chopped walnuts
- About 1 cup (1/2 small jar) Gregg's blackberry jam

If you don't like blackberry pips in the cake, warm the jam until melted and put through a sieve into the cake mix - or use a strong-flavoured dark plum jam.

Alternatively, try replacing the jam with a cup of fresh or frozen blueberries or chopped cooked gooseberries - or dried fruit simmered in a little apple juice. And maybe flaked almonds instead of the walnuts.

Preparation:

- ✓ We've given away our microwave, so I start by setting the oven to about 100 deg C, cutting 150 gm of unsalted butter into pieces in a small metal bowl, and putting it in the oven until just softened.
- ✓ Meanwhile, measure 1 cup brown sugar into a mixing bowl, and sift flour, spices and baking soda on to a square of baking paper.
- ✓ Take softened butter out of the oven and reset oven to preheat to 180°C or 160°C for fan oven. Add butter to brown sugar and beat till soft and fluffy.
- ✓ Then in the same small bowl used for softening butter, beat eggs and sour cream until evenly pale yellow.
- ✓ Add egg mix, alternately with flour mix, into butter/sugar mix and stir until just combined. Some kinds of flour take a little more liquid: if batter seems too stiff to spread into a cake tin, blend in 1 to 3 TBS milk. Then fold in the chopped nuts, and the jam or fruit.
- ✓ Line a shallow square cake tin with the baking paper, spoon in the batter and bake (about 35 min, 160°C in fan oven) - until the cake is just set in the centre, and begins to pull away from the sides of the tin.

With just two mixing bowls, a hand electric mixer, and one large spoon there's minimal washing up after baking.

Enjoy the cake - for tea, or as a dessert with yoghurt. It can last for several days in a tin - but rarely gets the chance!

Shalom.... Simcha bat Sarah