



We WISH you a MERRY Christmas!

Emergency Christmas Cake (makes 12 gifting cakes)

There is a myth that Christmas cake is only any good if you cook it in October. Rubbish! This recipe can be ready to eat and ice in an afternoon or if you have time, you can top it up with a little extra Christmas spirit over a few weeks. This works brilliantly as a single cake but it is called the “Emergency cake” after I discovered our Swiss neighbours handed out biscuits in the week before Christmas and of course, I hadn’t made any! I took this recipe and asked my super resourceful husband to clean and chop the remaining end from 12 tin cans, transforming them into mini cake tins for me. Hurrah! 12 mini cakes to hand out as gifts for neighbours and friends. It is so easy to do and your whole house will smell incredible! Merry Christmas

Ingredients

300g butter (softened)

180g light brown sugar (caster sugar is fine)

4 eggs

300g plain flour

1 packet of Lebkuchen spice mix or (1.5tsp mixed spice, 0.5 tsp ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg)

2tbsp marmalade or jam (I use black cherry jam)

1tsp baking powder

1tsp almond essence

1g dried mixed fruit – I used cranberries, raisins, golden raisins, dried apricots and dates (you could use cherries)

150g chopped walnuts or pecans (optional)

400ml rum/ brandy/ cold tea/ fruit juice

Zest and juice of one orange

Zest and juice of one lemon

Marzipan and Royal icing to decorate

Baking tin x 25cm square tin or 23cm round tin

OR

12 cans, cleaned with both ends removed

Instructions

1. Place all the dried fruit in a saucepan and add the booze and the juice from the orange and lemon. Bring to the boil, then take it off the heat, covering once cooled, and let it steep overnight ideally or at least for an hour or two.
2. When you are ready to go, cut strips of parchment paper and screw them up into a ball before using them to line the sides of the tins. Line a baking tray with a sheet of parchment and place the tins on top, don't worry the mixture is thick and won't seep out.
3. Pre-heat oven to 150c and pour yourself a glass of the booze for quality testing purposes.
4. Cream the butter and sugar together, then beat in the grated zest.
5. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition, then beat in the jam/ marmalade and almond extract.
6. Sift the dry ingredients together, then mix the soaked fruit alternately with the dry ingredients into the creamed mixture, combining thoroughly. Fold in the chopped nuts if using.
7. Share out the cake mix into the prepared tins and bake in the oven, for between 70-90 mins or until a cake-tester or skewer inserted into the cake comes out cleanish.
8. When the cakes are cooked, brush each with a teaspoon of your chosen Christmas Spirit.
9. If you want to store the cakes then wrap immediately in their baking paper and a double-thickness of tin foil – as this will trap the heat and form steam, which in turn will keep the cake soft on top. Feed the cakes weekly and then leave to "dry" with no feeding for 7 days before adding marzipan and topping with royal icing.
10. If you are ready to go, roll out your marzipan (as our leader Ina Garten says, store bought is fine) and use a cookie cutter or a glass to cut circles to just cover the top of the cake. I find doing the sides as well is overkill on a cake this small.
11. Brush the top of the cake with warm apricot jam and apply the layer of marzipan. You can then top it with fondant icing for a smooth effect or whip up some Royal icing for a snowy theme – royal needs a few hours or ideally overnight to dry out before you wrap.
12. Wrap in parchment paper and string/ ribbon and hand out to your friends!

