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Housekeepers' Chat

Mon., Nov. 28/27

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "The Festive Yuletide Fruit Cake." All information, including menu, from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

We shall waste no time on preliminaries today, but proceed immediately to the business of making and baking a delicious and delectable Christmas Fruit Cake. Yesterday I had a big sample of a cake made by the recipe I'm giving you. I wish I could send each of you a sample. Since that's impossible, I'll do the next best thing, and tell you how to make the cake.

This fruit cake has sixteen ingredients. So, before I begin reading the ingredients, lock the front door, cover up the canary bird's cage, and tell Johnny Junior to take his playthings in the other room. If the telephone rings, let's pretend we don't hear it.

Everybody ready now, for the Christmas Fruit Cake, with its sixteen ingredients:

1 pound raisins	1/2 cup tart jelly
1 pound currants	1/2 cup sour cream
1/4 pound citron	1/2 teaspoon soda
1/2 pound butter	1/2 teaspoon salt
1 cup chopped nuts	1 cup molasses
4 cups flour	5 eggs
1 cup sugar	1 tablespoon cinnamon, and
1/2 cup cider	1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

Let's check the ingredients, very carefully: (Repeat)

There now, that's done.

Before we can mix the fruit cake, we must prepare all the fruit. The fruit must be thoroughly picked over, carefully washed and dried. It takes some time to do this, but it pays. Our goal is a perfect fruit cake and we can't have a perfect fruit cake, unless the fruit is carefully prepared. Cut the citron into very small pieces.

Now, you may take your pencils again, and I'll tell you how to mix the cake. First, cream the butter and sugar. Then, separate the eggs. Add the yolks of the eggs to the butter and sugar. Next, add the liquid ingredients -- that is, the cider, the jelly, the sour cream, and the molasses. Now, divide the flour into two portions. With one-half of the flour mix the salt, the soda, and the spices. To the other half of the flour add the fruit and nuts. Next, add the dry ingredients -- that is, the flour, salt, soda, and spices -- gradually, to the liquid ingredients. Then add the floured fruit and nuts, and last, the beaten whites of the eggs. Just a word about the fruit. If it is well covered with

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flour, it will be scattered through the cake, as it should be, instead of settling to the bottom.

That concludes the method of mixing the cake. You will note that the recipe calls for a half cup of tart jelly. Grape or currant jelly will do nicely. If you have some jelly which is not firm enough to use on the table, you might use it for this cake. And be sure to select a molasses which has a good sweet flavor.

If you want a very rich fruit cake, one which is more fruity, and more nutty, I mean one which has more nuts in -- you can vary this recipe. Increase the raisins to one and one-half pounds, and add another cup of nuts. Or, you can use one pound of raisins, as in the original recipe, and add one cup of chopped candied cherries, candied pineapple, dates, or dried figs, and one extra cup of chopped nuts. Good nuts to use in a fruit cake are pecans, English walnuts, blanched almonds, and hickory nuts.

Bake the cake in a tube pan -- that is, an angel food pan -- which allows the heat to come up through the center. Choose a pan that will make the dough at least 3-1/2 to 4 inches deep, in the pan. The cake will take longer to bake, than in a shallow pan, but it will not dry out so much.

Be sure to line the pan with a well-greased paper. Sometimes small pieces of the fruit get next to the sides of the pan, and will stick and burn, unless there is a greased paper lining.

Have I told you everything you want to know about a fruit cake? Let's see. I believe I forgot to tell you to bake the cake in a slow oven, 275 to 300 degrees Fahrenheit, if you have a thermometer. And test the cake in the good old-fashioned manner -- by using a clean straw, or a toothpick. If the toothpick comes out dry, the cake is done.

When this cake is done, and cold, wrap it in waxed paper, or parchment paper, and put it in a tightly covered tin box, or jar. Then it will keep until Christmas -- and for weeks afterward, if the family gives it a chance. Look at the cake, once in a while, to see that no mold is starting. You can keep the fruit cake moist, by putting half an apple in with it, or a piece of cheesecloth, saturated with cider.

This cake is delicious, without a frosting. However, if you want a frosting, don't put it on until just before Christmas. Otherwise, the frosting will discolor, and crack.

Any questions, about the Fruit Cake? Ah, there's one question. A listener wants to know whether this fruit cake could be used as a Christmas gift. I should say so! You might double the recipe I have just given you, and make two cakes. However, if you double the recipe, bake the cake in two pans. It is better to bake fruit cakes in medium-sized loaves, than in large loaves. Get one of the attractive tin boxes, and bake your gift cake so that it will fit this box. I hope your cake will be just as good as the one the Recipe Lady made. If you think it's even better -- well, of course I can't judge that, without sampling it.

Let's hurry on to the questions, now, so there will be time for a menu.

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First question: "Please tell me how to make good cider vinegar." Answer: The directions are too long to broadcast. I will send you a copy of a bulletin called "Making Cider Vinegar in the Home and on the Farm." The bulletin is free.

Second question: "Please tell me how to clean white window shades."

Answer: There is no satisfactory method for cleaning window shades. Sometimes they can be improved, by wiping them quickly, with a damp cloth, or some of the soil can be rubbed off, with art gum. Both of these methods, however, are likely to streak white shades. A better way oftentimes to furbish up soiled shades is to take them off the rollers, and reverse them. The soiled part then comes at the top. Make a new casing at the bottom, for the wooden strip.

The other questions must wait until tomorrow. I have promised you a menu, and here it is: Corned Beef Hash; Mashed Turnips; Raw Celery; Chili Sauce, Stewed Prunes and Apricots; and Cookies.

You will find the recipe for Corned Beef Hash within the bright green covers of the Radio Cookbook. In this book you will also find a recipe for the cookies called "Best-Evers." Make the cookies, and you will see why they are called "Best-Evers".

To repeat the menu: Corned Beef Hash; Mashed Turnips; Raw Celery; Chili Sauce; and for dessert, Stewed Prunes and Apricots, and Best-Evers.

By the way, I wish you'd tell me what recipes you want during January. That seems a long way off, but I'd like to have your suggestions several weeks ahead of time.

