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Housekeepers' Chat

Monday

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Secrets of Making Fruit Cake". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletin Available: Radio Cookbook.

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For some people there's no nicer Christmas present than a home-baked fruit cake. And for the busy housewife, one advantage of giving fruit cake as a Christmas gift is that it can be safely made several weeks beforehand, if properly stored in a tin box. In fact, the flavor will be all the better if the cake is kept a little while, some people think.

I'm getting ready right now to make my own fruit cakes, so I planned to give you the recipe this morning. There are several little secrets about putting the cake together, that I've heard from the Recipe Lady.

I've bought some gay and attractive tins which correspond in size to my baking tins, so the cakes will fit.

My recipe calls for 16 ingredients. It makes between 5 and 6 pounds of cake. One large, or two small tube pans will hold the mixture, or three small-sized bread pans.

Before I begin reading these 16 ingredients, you'd better lock the front door, muffle the telephone, and give the baby something to play with. No interruptions allowed, at this important time. Now, shall I begin?

FRUIT CAKE

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

Let's count the ingredients again: (Repeat).

Before we mix the fruit cake, we must prepare all the fruit and the nuts. Pick the fruit over carefully, wash it, and dry it. May take 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, and be sure there are no pieces of shell in the nuts.

Now, take your pencils again, and I'll tell you how to mix the cake. (Read slowly).

First, cream the butter and sugar. Next, separate the eggs, and add the beaten yolks to the butter and sugar. Then 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 sift twice the salt, the soda, and spices. To the other half of the flour, add the fruit and nuts, and mix thoroughly so that the fruit is separated into small pieces. Now take the half of the flour which contains the salt, soda, and spices, and add this to the liquid ingredients. Then put in the floured fruit and nuts, using the hand to mix well. And last, fold in the beaten whites of the eggs. Just a word about the fruit. If it is well covered with flour, the fruit will be scattered through the cake as it should be, instead of settling to the bottom.

That's all there is to 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 in the cake. And be sure to select a molasses which has a good sweet flavor.

If you want a very rich fruit cake, you can vary this recipe. You can add an extra half-pound of raisins, or 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 extra chopped nuts. Good nuts to use in a fruit cake are pecans, English walnuts, blanched almonds, and hickory nuts.

Do you want to bake your fruit cake in one large loaf, or in two or more smaller ones, so that you can perhaps give away a loaf for a Christmas gift? If you want to bake it in one large loaf, choose a large tube pan that will allow the dough to be 3-1/2 to 4 inches deep in the pan. A cake this size will require from 3 to 4 1/2 hours to bake, at very moderate oven temperature (250° to 275°F.). Fruit cake, you know, always needs to be baked in a moderate oven, because the fruit heats through slowly, and burns easily on sides and top if the oven is too hot.

If you prefer to bake your fruit cake in two smaller tube pans, it will take only about 3 hours at this same moderate oven temperature (250° to 275° F.). Or as I said, bake your cake in small-sized bread pans. This recipe would make three loaves that size, each one weighing about 2 pounds. The one large loaf will weigh from 5 to 6 pounds.

No matter what size or shape the pan is, by all means line it with well-greased paper. Sometimes small pieces of the fruit get next to the sides of the pan and stick and burn, unless there is a greased paper lining.

When you think the cake is done, test it in the good old-fashioned way, with a clean straw or a toothpick. If the toothpick comes out dry, the cake is done.

Turn the cake out on a rack to cool as soon as you take it from the oven, and when cold wrap it in waxed paper, or parchment paper, and put it in a tightly covered tin box. Then it will keep until Christmas, and for weeks afterward, if the family give it half a chance. Look at the cake, once in a while, to see that no mold is starting. The Recipe Lady says you can keep the fruit cake moist by putting half an apple in with it, or a piece of cheesecloth dampened with cider.

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

Now that we've finished with the fruit cake, it's time to think about what to have for dinner. Let's see. It's Monday, so there will surely be some cold meat left from Sunday's roast. Scalloped potatoes are fine with cold meat, aren't they? And quite easy to prepare. For our green vegetable, spinach would be a good selection. Maybe you have some of the cranberry sauce left from the Thanksgiving dinner- that would be extra good with cold meat. For that matter you may be still eating cold turkey, although I know in my house the last vestiges disappeared as hash on Saturday night.

Another reminiscence of Thanksgiving--pumpkin for dessert. Pumpkin tarts would be my choice, made just the same as pumpkin pie, only baked in individual shells. With or without whipped cream on top, according to your mood and what's available. If you missed the broadcast of the pumpkin pie recipe, it is in the Radio cookbook.

I'll repeat the whole menu: Cold Sliced Meat; Scalloped Potatoes; Spinach; Cranberry Sauce; and Pumpkin Tarts.

Tuesday: "Mid-Winter Salads".

