

NUTTY AS A FRUITCAKE

Fruitcake is a cake made with candied fruit and/or dried fruit, nuts and spices with the option of being soaked in spirits. The ratio of fruit and nuts to batter is very high with just enough batter to hold it all together, and results in a very dense, heavy cake. Fruitcakes are classified as either light or dark, the lighter ones being less rich and the darker ones bolder in flavor.

It is not known for sure why fruitcake is associated with holidays, but it is assumed that it started with the English who passed out slices of cake to the poor women who sang Christmas carols in the streets during the 1700's. By the end of the 18th century, there were laws in England restricting the use of fruitcake to Christmas, Easter, weddings, christenings and funerals. In England today, it is still customary for unmarried wedding guests to put a slice of dark fruitcake under their pillows so they will dream of the person they are to marry. Mail order fruitcakes began in 1913 and the expression "nutty as a fruitcake" began in 1935.

At Grandma's Pantry, we have all the fixings for fruitcake (minus the spirits). We carry a full line of the candied fruits, such as cherries (both red and green), cherry pineapple mix, pineapple wedges, orange peel, lemon peel, citron and a candied fruit mix. We also have pitted dates, chopped dates, raisins (both golden and regular), currants, apricots and more. We carry a variety of nuts including the common fruitcake nuts - black walnuts, English walnuts, Brazil nuts, hazelnuts

and pecans. Our supply of spices is ready for your fruitcake - with cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg, to mention just a few.

Here are two recipes for fruitcake, one submitted as a favorite by a customer and one an old handed down recipe from an employee.

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL FRUITCAKE

3 cups coarsely chopped Brazil nuts or other nuts (walnuts, pecans or hazelnuts)

1 lb. pitted dates, coarsely chopped

1 cup halved maraschino cherries

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup all purpose flour

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt

3 eggs

1 tsp. vanilla extract

In a mixing bowl, combine nuts, dates and cherries. In another bowl, stir together flour, sugar, baking powder and salt; add to nut mixture, stirring until nuts and fruit are well coated. Beat eggs until foamy and stir in vanilla. Fold into nut mixture. Mix well. Pour into a greased and waxed paper lined 9x5x3 inch loaf pan. Bake at 300 degrees for 1 hour and 45 minutes. Cool 10 minutes in pan before removing to wire rack. Yield 24 servings.

RUTH'S FAVORITE FRUITCAKE

Starting the night before, cover and soak 2 lbs. golden raisins in orange juice (or wine).

Batter:

1 lb. butter

3 ¼ cups sugar

Cream together.

Separate 12 eggs Add egg yolks and beat in well. (Set aside the whites for later use).

1 cup orange juice (or wine)

1 ½ tsp. baking soda, dissolved in a little hot water

Add to creamed mixture.

Sift together

5 cups flour (occident or Kyrol)

½ tsp. cinnamon

1 tsp. each of cloves, nutmeg and salt

2 tsp. baking powder

Add to creamed mixture and beat well.

Chop mix and flour:

1 lb. dates

½ lb. figs

½ lb. citron (optional)

½ lb. Brazil nuts

½ lb. almonds

½ lb. English or black walnuts

½ lb. red and green pineapple

Add drained and floured raisins (from the night before)

Add to the dough.

Beat the 12 egg whites until stiff and fold into the mixture.

Use 3-4 loaf pans (depending on size used) that have been well greased and lined with wax paper. Bake at 250 degrees for 1½-2 hours or until done.

For those of you that would like a simple fruitcake cookie for the holidays, here is a recipe from the internet (www.about.com).

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup shortening
- 1 egg
- 1 3/4 cup sifted all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon soda
- 1/4 cup buttermilk
- 3/4 cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup candied cherries
- 1 cup chopped dates
- 1/2 cup mixed candied fruits and peels

Preparation:

Cream shortening and sugar until light. Add egg and beat until well blended. Reserving a little of the flour to toss with the fruit. Combine remaining flour with the salt and soda. Add the dry ingredients alternately with buttermilk. Toss fruits with the reserved flour. Fold in the floured fruits and chopped pecans. Drop by spoonfuls onto greased baking sheets, leaving 1 1/2 to 2 inches between cookies. Bake at 400° for 8 to 13 minutes, depending on size of cookies. Makes from 3 to 5 dozen fruit cake cookies. Store in an air-tight container.

Make fruitcake a part of your holiday traditions and at Grandma's Pantry, we are here to help you with the necessary ingredients. Enjoy!

“So, whatever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10:31)