

Summer Fruit Cake -With plums and berries

This recipe is our adaptation of one published in the Melbourne Age in January 1996. The original recipe used blood plums and berries to top off a cake base of sliced apple and mixed spices. For the topping, frozen berries and summer fruits can be substituted for fresh ones; try mangoes, peaches, apricots and nectarines, in addition to berries. For the batter, instead of the apple, or as well as, try pear, pineapple or whatever else might work.

The spiced butter topping combined with the fruit juices results in a lovely syrup oozing down the side of the cake. The cake takes one and half to two hours to cook as the oven temperature is kept low to avoid burning the topping. A foil covering is recommended towards the end. The cake requires a raised paper lining, as the mixture will rise substantially and the paper helps to un mould it. The recipe falls into different parts as shown by the ingredients list.

For a two-litre loaf tin:

- 1 ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/3 tsp ground ginger
- 1/4 tsp ground cloves
- 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg

- 100 g castor sugar
- 50 g butter
- 1 tbsp water

- 200 g self-raising flour
- or 150 g self-raising flour and 50 g almond meal
- 200 g castor sugar
- 2 eggs
- 200 ml pouring cream
- 50 g butter melted
- 1/2 tsp vanilla essence
- and or 1/2 tsp almond essence
- 1 medium sized apple

- 1 or 2 plums (or peach, nectarine, mango, ...)
- 125 g raspberries, blackberries, blackcurrants, strawberries, ...

(This is a simple cake mixture, based on self-raising flour – enhance with almond meal and/or essence. Use your preferred cake mixture if you have an alternative.)

Method:

Set the oven to 160°C.

In the photos, raspberries, blackcurrants and strawberries are on top of the plums.)





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Prepare a loaf tin with 2 litre capacity. (A loaf tin gives a great shape and, if lined properly, the cake can be removed easily enough.) Butter or spray the inside. Line it with one sheet of baking paper that comes a centimetre or two above the top of each side. (A springform pan could be used instead of a loaf tin.)

To make the spice mix, combine the four spices in a small bowl and set aside to be divided evenly between the cake and the topping.

To make the butter topping, combine the castor sugar, half the spice mix, butter and water over low heat. Stir or whisk until well combined and smooth. Set aside and reheat later if required.

Combine the flour, sugar and remaining spice mix. In another bowl, add the eggs, cream, butter and vanilla and beat to combine well. Don't peel the apple, cut into quarters, remove the core and slice thinly or chop into 1 cm dice. Stir the apple through the egg and milk mixture. Quickly stir into the dry ingredients until just incorporated. The mixture will be quite thick. Tip into the base of the loaf tin and spread evenly.

Slice the plums into one eighth segments and arrange in two rows the length of the tin, leaving gaps between. Combine the berries – frozen ones need not be thawed – and scatter over the top.

Reheat the butter topping a little so it is liquid enough and spread roughly over the top of the fruit.

Bake for 90 minutes and up to 2 hours (or longer if necessary) at 160°C. Check the top after 40 minutes or so and place a sheet of foil over the top if necessary to avoid burning. Remove the foil towards the end briefly to give the top a golden brown colour. The cake should change from a wobbly texture in the middle to a reasonably firm one. Test that the cake is cooked using a skewer.

Allow to cool slightly before removing by pulling up on the baking paper. Transfer to a large plate and slide the cake off the baking paper.

Serve:

Serves 10 to 12. Serve warm or cold, with cream or ice cream.

Equipment:

One two-litre loaf tin, or equivalent springform pan.

Difficulty and Time:

Moderately difficult (3/5). However: watch the top does not burn and give the cake another ten minutes or so if it is not firm enough.

Notes and variations:

- Vary the cake mixture if you have a better option, but still include the apple and spices.
- Vary the fruits according to what you have on hand but include berries of some sort.
- The cake could be served hot from the oven – if you can't unmould it, slice it in the tin.