

Washington family special cake

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cups currants
- 1/3 cup chopped candied orange peel
- 1/3 cup chopped candied lemon peel
- 1/3 cup chopped candied citron
- 3/4 cup Madeira, divided
- 1/4 cup French brandy
- 3 cups all-purpose flour, sifted
- 1/2 cup slivered almonds
- 1/2 teaspoons ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoons ground mace
- 3/4 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 3 large eggs, separated
- Sugar Icing (recipe follows) (optional)
- 3 large egg whites at room temperature
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 tablespoons rose water or orange-flower water

Directions

1. Combine the currants, orange and lemon peels, and citron in a large bowl. Add 1/2 cup of the Madeira, and stir to combine. Cover with plastic wrap, and set aside for at least 3 hours, or as long as overnight. Stir the remainder of the Madeira together with the brandy, cover, and set aside.

2. When ready to bake the cake, preheat the oven to 325°F. Grease and flour a 10-inch tube pan.

3. Drain the fruits in a large strainer set over a bowl, stirring occasionally to extract as much of the Madeira as possible. Add the strained Madeira to the set-aside Madeira and brandy.

4. Combine 1/4 cup of the flour with the fruit, and mix well. Add the almonds, and set aside. Sift the remaining flour with the nutmeg and mace.

5. In the bowl of an electric mixer, cream the butter until it is light. Add the sugar, 1/2 cup at a time, beating for several minutes after adding each ingredient. Whisk the egg yolks until they are light and

smooth, and add them to the butter and sugar. Continue to beat for several minutes, until the mixture is light and fluffy.

6. Alternately add the spiced flour, 1/2 cup at a time, and the Madeira and brandy, beating until smooth.

7. In a separate bowl, beat the egg whites to form stiff peaks. By hand, gently fold them into the batter, combining lightly until well blended. By hand, fold in the fruit in thirds, mixing until well combined.

8. Pour the batter into the prepared pan, smoothing the top with an offset spatula or the back of a spoon. Bake for about 1 1/2 hours, or until a wooden skewer inserted in the center comes out clean. Set the cake on a wire rack to cool in the pan for 20 minutes. If serving the cake plain, turn it out of the pan to cool completely. If finishing it with icing, turn the warm cake out of the pan onto a baking sheet, and proceed with the icing. To ice the cake, spread Sugar Icing generously onto the surface, piling it high and swirling it around the top and sides. Set in the turned-off warm oven and let sit for at least 3 hours, or until the cake is cool and the icing has hardened. The icing will crumble when the cake is sliced.

Directions for Sugar Icing

1. In the bowl of an electric mixer, start beating the egg whites on low speed, gradually adding 2 tablespoons of the sugar. After about 3 minutes, or when they just begin to form soft peaks, increase the speed to high and continue adding the sugar, 2 tablespoons at a time, beating until all the sugar is incorporated and the egg whites form soft peaks.

2. Add the rose water, and continue beating to form stiff peaks. Use immediately to ice the cake. Makes one 10-inch cake