

Mom's English Fruitcake

This recipe comes from Nicholas Lodge's Mother, and he writes, "This is the holiday fruitcake that I grew up with. I have very fond memories of making these traditional cakes with my Mother and Grandmother as well. I hope you start a holiday tradition as well with these cakes. I do have a warning for you, this recipe makes two generous five-pound cakes. Get out your largest mixing bowl and have fun!"

4 cups all-purpose flour, divided	1 cup whole milk
1 pound dates, chopped	3/4 cup light corn syrup
1 pound candied citron, optional	2 teaspoons baking soda
1 pound pecans, chopped	2 teaspoons ground nutmeg
1 pound figs, coarsely chopped	2 teaspoons ground allspice
1 (15 oz.) box raisins	1 teaspoon baking powder
1 (10 oz.) box currants	1 cup brandy
1 cup butter, softened	plus additional brandy for soaking
2 cups white granulated sugar	
12 large eggs	

Grease and flour 2 (10 inch) tube pans, then line with parchment paper and grease and flour the parchment paper as well and set aside.

Combine 1/2 cup flour, and the next 6 ingredients in a large bowl.

Toss lightly to coat and set aside.

Beat butter at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Slowly add the sugar.

Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well until blended after each addition.

Add milk and corn syrup and mix well.

Combine the remaining 3½ cups flour, baking soda and next 4 ingredients.

Add to the butter mixture alternately with the 1 cup of brandy, beginning and ending with the dry mixture. Mix at a low speed after each addition until blended.

Pour the sugar mixture over the fruit mixture and stir well to combine.

Spoon the batter into the prepared pans.

Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour or until a tester inserted into the thickest part of the cake comes out clean. (Or, for better results, bake at a lower temperature for a longer time.)

Remove from the oven to a wire rack and allow to cool and turn out of the cake pans.

Wrap the cooled cakes in cheesecloth that has been soaked with brandy.

Store in an airtight container. Once a week, pour a little brandy over each cake for at least a month. If at all possible, try to make your holiday cakes sometime in late October. The maturing time until late December greatly enhances the flavor.

Note:

Here in the south, where fruitcake is very popular, it is not uncommon to make the family holiday fruitcakes one-year in advance, lovingly adding a small amount of spirits to the cakes each month. Be sure to store the fruitcakes in airtight containers.

In England, many homes have old ceramic crocks sitting on the shelves in the kitchen pantry containing fruit mixtures that are soaking in a family-favorite spirit or liquor for months prior to the appointed fruitcake baking time. Yes, the English do take their fruitcake very serious...as they should!