

RAISIN-DATE LENTEN CAKE

You will need a 9" x 13" baking dish/pan or 10" Bundt pan for this recipe. Be sure to read "**TIPS**" at the end before preparing this recipe.

This is an excellent cake to make for your Lenten potluck suppers or other fasting periods since it doesn't have any dairy products in it. The cake rises very well, but may fall in the middle if using the 9"x13" pan. Don't worry - that will be the best part since it seems to be denser and thus, more moist.

INGREDIENTS:

4 cups sifted flour
2 tsp baking POWDER
1 tsp salt
2 tsp cinnamon
1 tsp nutmeg (1/2 tsp if using freshly-grated)

grated rind (zest) of 1 lemon or 1 tsp lemon extract
grated rind (zest) of 1 orange or 1 tsp orange extract

1 cup orange juice
1 cup water
(yes, you need both)

1 1/2 cups sugar
1 cup vegetable oil

2 Tbsp lemon juice
1 tsp baking SODA

1/2 cup dark raisins
1/2 cup white raisins
1/2 cup chopped nuts (walnuts or pecans) or substitute
equivalent amount of dried dates

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

1. In a large bowl, sift together flour, baking POWDER, salt, cinnamon & nutmeg.

Note: I don't sift, it's too much of a pain - just put it all in a mixing bowl and stir well with a wire whisk.

2. Whisk in grated rinds.

3. In a separate bowl, cream sugar & oil thoroughly.

4. In a separate TALL glass, mix baking SODA into lemon juice - it will foam up!

5. In another, large empty bowl, alternately combine the dry ingredients with juices, water, & sugar-oil, mixing well and scraping down the bowl between additions.

6. Stir in nuts and raisins.

7. Bake for 40-45 minutes or until wooden skewer comes out cleanly.

8. Allow to cool well then dust well with powdered sugar or:

FROSTING (Optional)

Start out with about a cup of unsifted powdered sugar and two tablespoons of liquid - you can use water, milk, lemon juice or orange juice, depending on the frosting flavor you desire. If using water or milk add 1/2 - 1 teaspoon vanilla for each cup of powdered sugar.)

Whisk well - the frosting should be fairly thick - like honey or maybe a little thicker. Add liquid or powdered sugar to get desired consistency. Usually 1 - 2 cups of powdered sugar and the 2 - 4 tablespoons of liquid yields an adequate amount of frosting.

Drizzle over cake with whisk and or spatula.

I put the cake in the fridge to set the frosting, but that is not necessary.

TIPS:

Okay to substitute equal amounts of your favorite dried fruits for the raisins, e.g., chopped dates, chopped apricots, or mixture thereof. I usually omit the nuts and load up on the fruit.

For zesting fruit rinds, I strongly suggest that you invest in a Microplane grater (\$10-15). You can get them at Bed, Bath & Beyond or similar stores. There are several varieties - I used the hand-held model with a wide surface. The other hand-held model looks like a long, narrow wood rasp/file - you'll know it when you see it. Unlike our grandmothers' graters, these are razor sharp and make zesting or grating a snap, even on hard cheeses or chocolate. However, BE CAREFUL not to cut your fingers!!! Microplane also recently came out with a box grater - throw your old one away and get one of these!!!

Also see them at <http://www.microplane.com>

When zesting the rind, be careful not to get into the white part (pith) of the fruit because it is very bitter - you just want the colored part.

I like to make this in a standard, 10" Bundt pan. Be sure to grease and flour it well or use Pam with Flour or Baker's Joy spray - even if the Bundt pan is a non-stick, Teflon coated one. You will have to bake it for an additional 20 minutes or so (about 1 hour total) or until a wooden skewer comes out cleanly.

For serving, I like to heat a piece up in the microwave with some butter (or non-dairy margarine if fasting) on it. About 40 - 60 seconds is sufficient - butter will just begin to melt.

Cake keeps well in a cake holder for about 5 days OUT of the refrigerator and in a covered cake holder.

Get the best spices and whole nutmegs from: <http://www.penzeys.com>

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As adapted from Oklahoma City's St. George Greek Orthodox Church's "Classic Greek Cooking" cookbook, page 133. (Page reference may be different in subsequent editions.)