

JINGLE BAKES

Nancy Birtwhistle's Christmas cake

If baking with a child, please supervise them at all times

Ingredients:

- 1 kg mixed dried fruit and peel
- 100g french morello flavour glace cherries (cut into thirds)
- 4 tbsp Cointreau, brandy, sherry or juice from the orange (after zesting)
- 250g salted butter
- 250g dark brown soft sugar
- 1 tbsp golden syrup or black treacle
- 5 eggs (beaten together in a mixing jug)
- 250g plain flour
- 1 tsp ground mace (or 2 tsp ground nutmeg)
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- Half tsp ground cinnamon
- Finely grated zests and juice of 1 orange and 1 lemon



Method:

1. First thing in the morning put mixed fruit, fruit zests, fruit juice and cherries in a large bowl and add the cointreau or other liquid, stir and cover with a plate then leave until the evening – or several days if you are busy.
2. In the evening when you are ready to mix – cream together the butter and brown sugar until pale, light and fluffy.
3. Add the syrup or treacle and continue to mix. Gradually incorporate the beaten egg a little at a time along with a teaspoon of flour. This helps to prevent the mixture from curdling. When all the egg has been incorporated gently fold in the rest of the flour which has been sifted together with the spices.
4. Finally, fold in the soaked fruits.
5. Transfer the mix to the prepared 9 inch loose bottomed springform tin (greased and lined on both bottom and sides) and bake for 10 hours at 100 degrees centigrade (fan).
6. I usually put the cake into the oven at 10pm and take it out at 8am the next day. The temperature of your oven is critical – even 10

degrees out will make a difference. I would suggest you check your oven temperature with a thermometer or alternatively before removing your cake from the oven you check with a temperature probe that the internal baked temperature is 99 degrees centigrade.

7. Leave it to go completely cold before carefully removing from the tin. I leave the baking paper on the cake then wrap it in foil and place in a tin in a cool place.



NANCY'S TOP TIP

If you don't have a 9" springform tin try this. Line a large baking sheet with non stick baking parchment then take 220ml baked bean tins, washed, labels removed. Remove the top and base with a tin opener then line the sides with a piece of non stick paper. Fill the tins to the top with the mixture. The mixture is thick and won't run out at the bottom. Bake for the 5.5 hours then allow to go completely cold before pushing out of the tins.