

Fruit Cake

This cake improves with keeping.

Ingredients

225g butter
225g caster sugar
275g plain flour
4 large eggs, beaten
350g raisins or sultanas
350g currants
175g mixed peel
125g glacé cherries
125g flaked almonds, toasted
grated rind of 1 lemon and juice of half the lemon

Method

Prepare an 8-inch/20cm cake tin by greasing it thoroughly, then shaking flour around to cover the inside. Wash the glacé cherries to remove the syrup coating, so that they don't sink to the bottom of the cake. Pre-heat an oven to 170°C.

Cream the butter and sugar really well together until they are fluffy and pale in colour. Sieve the flour, and sprinkle 2 tablespoons over the dried fruit; using your hands, mix the flour through the dried fruit so that it is evenly distributed. Gradually beat the eggs into the butter and sugar mixture, then stir in the flour, the dried fruit, mixed peel, glacé cherries, half the almonds and the lemon rind. Stir in the lemon juice. The mixture should be a soft, dropping consistency; if you feel it is too stiff, add more lemon juice.

Put the cake mixture into the prepared tin, arrange the rest of the almonds on the top, and bake in a moderate oven at 170°C for 30 minutes, then reduce the heat to 140°C and bake for a further 2 hours. Leave to cool in the tin.