

Cumquat (or candied cherry, ginger or pineapple) Christmas Cake

A reader wrote in to ask for my 'Cumquat Christmas cake'- she'd lost the recipe. It sounds delicious, but I can't remember ever giving a recipe, though I have used candied cumquats in cakes.

Anyhow, there are still a few bottles of candied cumquats in the larder- wonderful to decorate cakes or on icecream sundaes , but as we rarely eat icecream and I even more rarely decorate the cakes with anything more than scatter of macadamias, they don't get used much. They are also a delight in a Christmas gin and tonic, but I make those even less often than the icecream sundaes.

So...here is the cake I made last week. The candied cumquats look and taste superb, but you can substitute candied ginger or candied cherries. The latter won't add much flavour, but ate last they'll look good. Chunks of glace pineapple are good instead too, but not dried pineapple- too fibrous.

Glacé Cumquats

Place cumquats(or calamondins) in a saucepan.

Cover with water. Simmer till skins are soft.

Add one cup of sugar for every two cups of liquid- if necessary add more water. Simmer till very thick and syrupy.

Store cumquats in sealed containers in a cool place- not necessarily the fridge- till needed. They should keep for a year or so, but throw out if they bubble, change colour, smell alcoholic or look strange in any way.

Cake ingredients:

250 gm butter

5 eggs

half cup ground almonds

2 cups of plain flour

The fruit part:

1 cup orange juice, pineapple juice or whisky, or a mix of any of the three

juice of 1 lemon or three limes

3 cups sultanas

1 cup currants

4 cups chopped crystallised cherries, or chopped glacé pineapple, or glace cherries, or glace ginger, or candied cumquats, or a mix of any of these

half a cup pineapple or apricot jam

3 tbsp grated fresh orange rind or lemon rind or both mixed

1 cup finely chopped fresh or canned pineapple or grated apple or grated carrot

1 cup brown sugar

Cover with plastic wrap. Place in the fridge. Leave overnight.
OR bring slowly to the boil; simmer 3 minutes. Cool.

Now melt butter; take off the heat and mix in the five eggs one by one then add the ground almonds, and plain flour and the fruit mixture. Mix gently but well - don't keep beating though once it's all amalgamated.

Place in a deep cake tin. I line the edges with 3 layers of baking paper, otherwise the crust dries out too much, and place a dish of water in the bottom of the oven. Bake at about 150 C for 4 hours. If the cake seems to be browning too fast turn the heat down or cover with a sheet of alfoil half way through cooking.

Cool in tin before turning out. Wrap in alfoil and keep till Christmas. Drizzle on more whisky each week if you like a whisky scented cake.

Note: if you make many small cakes instead they make excellent Christmas presents. In this case cooking time will be less. You'll have to sniff, poke and see i.e. as soon as the cake has been filling the house with good spicy fragrance for about half an hour, dip a skewer or even a knife in and see if it comes out clean, or if the top springs back when you press it lightly with your finger.