

Easter Simnel Cake with Chocolate Nest

Ingredients

For the cake

100g Sultanas
100g Currants
100g Raisins
1 Teabag
1 tbsp Brandy
2 tbsp Golden Syrup
75g Self Raising Flour
75g Plain Flour
100g Butter, softened
100g Castor Sugar
2 Whole Eggs plus 1 Yolk
Rind of 1 Lemon
Rind of 1 Orange

Almond Paste

350g Ground Almonds
175g Icing Sugar plus a little extra for rolling
175g Caster Sugar
½ tsp Almond Extract
1 tsp Lemon juice
1 tsp Brandy
2 Eggs plus 1 Yolk

*(You can skip this stage if
using bought Almond
Paste)*

At a glance

Moderate skill

If have a bit of patience, time and skill this cake is well worth it.

These following stages can easily be split into stages over a few days:

Preparation time 1- 1½ hours

Baking time up to 2½ hours depending on your oven

Decoration time ½ hour

Serves 8 to 10

You'll need

An electric mixer makes this easier

Large bowls

7 to 8" tin (approx 18-20cm)

If making almond paste a pan

Rolling pin

Chocolate nest decoration

300g Cooking Chocolate (i use a mixture of milk and dark but whatever is your preference)

4 Shredded Wheat cereal biscuits

1 Tbsp Olive Oil

1-2 bags of Mini Chocolate eggs to fill the nest

Method

The Cake

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C, Gas 4, 160°C fan oven. Line a 7 to 8" round cake tin with greaseproof paper, use 2 layers of paper all around the tin and in the bottom of the tin, I also wrap brown paper right around the edge of the tin along with a piece underneath the tin in the oven. This helps to protect the cake during the long baking process.
2. Make the cake by mixing all the dried fruits together in a bowl.
3. Put the teabag in another bowl and add 125ml boiling water and infuse for 10 minutes until nice and strong. Pour the liquid over the fruit, then stir in the golden syrup and rind of both the orange and lemon and the brandy.
4. Beat the butter and sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer until the mixture is light in colour and then beat in the eggs and yolk bit at a time then gently stir in both flours until smooth.
5. Finally stir in the dried fruits and their liquid.
6. Spoon half the cake mixture into the lined tin
7. Take the almond paste and cut off one third and roll a circle to exactly the same size as your tin (you will need a little icing sugar on a clean work surface to do this) lift and place on top of the cake mixture, pressing down gently to remove any trapped air. Spoon the rest of your cake mixture on top of the almond paste circle.
8. Cover the top of the tin with foil or brown paper and bake for 45 minutes, remove the foil/paper from the top and continue to bake for another 50 minutes until golden brown and a skewer inserted into the cake comes out clean, if it needs a longer in the middle but is brown enough on top, then cover again to stop it from over browning. (The cooking time can vary according to your oven). Leave in the tin until completely cold.
9. Once the cake is completely cold the remaining almond paste can be rolled out to cover the top and sides of the cake. You are now ready to make the nest for the top....

Almond Paste

If using begin by making the Almond Paste

1. Begin by mixing together the icing and caster sugar in a large bowl, then stir in the whole eggs and the egg yolk. Place the bowl over a pan of barely simmering water and whisk for about 10 minutes until the mixture is thick and fluffy (this is easier with the help of an electric hand whisk!)
2. Remove the bowl from the heat and whisk in the almond extract, lemon juice and brandy and continue to whisk until the mixture cools a bit.
3. Stir in the ground almonds and knead with your hand to form a firm paste.
4. Cover with cling film and leave to one side.

This almond paste recipe is a Delia Smith recipe and i use it for my Christmas cake too, it is a bit fiddly, but well worth the effort, however the cake also works well with a couple of packets of bought almond paste or marzipan.

Chocolate Nest

1. Melt the chocolate of your preference in a bowl slowly over a pan of warm water, the water needs to be barely simmering as if the chocolate gets too hot it will go thick and lumpy.
2. Stir in the olive oil and then the crushed Shredded Wheat biscuits, use a spoon to arrange the chocolate mixture on top of your marzipan covered cake in the form of a nest.
3. Allow to set and then fill with your favourite chocolate eggs and a chick if you have one.
4. A ribbon around the sides finishes it off nicely but is not essential.

If you don't have any brown paper for around the outside of the cake tin then another double layer of greaseproof paper all around the outside, underneath and on top will also work fine. To fix the paper around the outside i just use staples or paper clips and then the paper can be used again.

Adding Olive Oil to the chocolate prevents it from setting too hard so that you can slice through it a little bit easier.



**Aud's
Tips**