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## CHRISTMAS COOKING

**M**OST people find that by dint of saving up butter in various little ways, they can make just one good Christmas cake.

Other fruit cakes, less rich, but still fruity and tasty, are then useful for more ordinary occasions, and recipes for these are always in demand. The idea is to have these things made in advance so that there is always something in reserve during the holidays, when one does not want to take time for baking.

### Good Christmas Cake

This is a good reliable recipe — a favourite ever since the Daisy Chain first started at 12R in Auckland. It is most fortunate that we are able, at this time, to buy the packets of mixed cake fruits, all cleaned and ready for use. Many people are sending these packets to friends in Great Britain.

Half-pound butter, 5 eggs, 1 teaspoon baking powder, 10oz. flour, ½ teaspoon each of following seven essences—vanilla, lemon, pineapple, brandy, cherry, almond, and any other flavouring at all, ½lb. sugar, 2lb. fruit, ¼ to ½ teaspoon curry powder. Prepare fruit, and sprinkle with flour. Put in a warm place while creaming butter and sugar. Also have flour sifted ready, and in a warm place. When butter and sugar are nicely creamed, add eggs one at a time, and sprinkle in a little flour with each egg to prevent curdling. Now add curry powder, then fruit and flour alternately, baking powder last. Quickly turn mixture into well-greased tin, and bake in a moderate oven for about 3½ hours; oven 300 degrees to begin, and after the first ¾ hour, the heat may be lowered.

### Wholemeal Christmas Cake

Half a pound each of butter, raw or brown sugar, sultanas, currants and raisins (or you may use 1½lb. of the mixed packaged fruit), pinch of salt, 2oz. peel, 2 eggs, 2½ breakfast cups wholemeal (fine), ½ heaped teaspoon baking soda, ½ pint hot milk. Beat butter and sugar. Add beaten eggs. Put the soda in the hot milk. Sift wholemeal, and mix it with fruit. Add milk and wholemeal little by little alternately to first mixture till all is mixed in well. Bake from three to five hours—regulate at 3 for first ½ hour, then 2 for 1 hour, then 1 for remainder of cooking. Two level teaspoons of curry powder added to this recipe has the same effect as brandy, and gives the cake a delicious flavour.

### Fruit Custard Cake

This is a very well-established favourite, and keeps well. It must, however, be kept for a week before cutting. Half-pound of butter, 1lb. raisins, 1lb. currants, 2oz. cherries, 1lb. sultanas, ¼lb. mixed peel (or 3¼lb. mixed, packaged fruit), 1lb. 2oz. flour, 2 eggs, 2 teaspoons baking powder, essences to taste, ¾ pint milk, ½lb. brown sugar, 1 teaspoon mixed spices.

Rub butter into flour, sift in all other ingredients, add sugar and fruit. Boil

milk, pour on beaten eggs to make custard, then pour over the other ingredients, and mix. Cook 3 hours as usual.

### Steamed Fruit Cake

The flavour of this is excellent, and different from the usual baked cake. The mixture is cooked in a round tin, not more than two-thirds full, with a greased paper placed over the top and tied tightly round the sides to prevent steam or water getting in. Place this in the steamer, and shut lid down very tightly. Keep the water boiling briskly all the time, adding more if it boils away. Steam the cake for 3½ hours, and then bake in a moderate oven for ½ hour. Here is the mixture:—Half a pound each of flour, brown sugar and butter, 2lb. mixed fruit, ½ teaspoon mixed spice, ½ teaspoon nutmeg, 1 heaped teaspoon baking powder, 5 eggs, and (if desired) ¼ cup brandy (if not, use brandy essence, or a mixture of almond and vanilla). Mince the fruit. Cream the butter first, then beat in the sugar, then add the well-beaten yolks of eggs. Now add the fruit, peel, spice and almonds, then sifted flour and baking powder. As each ingredient is added, mix very well. Lastly, fold in lightly the beaten whites, and add brandy if desired. Cook as above.

### Fruit Cake with Marmalade

Six ounces butter, 1 egg, well beaten, 1lb. mixed fruit, 3 tablespoons marmalade, 6oz. sugar, 1lb. flour, 1 teaspoon carbonate of soda dissolved in a little milk, about ½ pint of milk. Cream butter and sugar, add egg, then soda, marmalade, then fruit and flour alternately. Then add sufficient milk to make a nice mixture. Bake in a moderate oven about 3 hours.

## FROM THE MAILBAG

### Beans in Tomato Sauce

Dear Aunt Daisy,

You have been talking about cooking haricot beans, and I thought you might be interested to know how I do mine. I have my husband, three grown sons and two daughters at home, and this is their favourite Saturday night tea. One pound of lima or haricot beans is more than enough for us all.

I soak the beans all night, using boiling water, then next day I cook them for about 2 hours. I add a little soda to the first boiling — about five minutes, and then I strain that off and cover with plenty of boiling water and cook for two hours. Add a little salt towards the end of cooking, not too much if you intend to add bacon. Strain well, and then cover with a small tin of tomato soup. Cut up a few slices of bacon into squares and mix in with the beans, and add lastly a dessertspoon of golden syrup. This gives a delicious flavour. Bake in casserole for about one hour to mix the flavour well.

**FRENCH TOAST:** Then I beat up three eggs (when plentiful) with about

## Strawberry Cake

Beat ¼lb. butter and 1 small cup sugar to a cream, add beaten yolks of 2 eggs and then 2 small cups flour sifted with 2 small teaspoons baking powder, add 1 tablespoon of milk until the mixture is a nice biscuit consistency. Put half the mixture into a deep sandwich tin, then cover with a layer of ripe strawberries, sprinkle with castor sugar and cover with rest of mixture. Bake ¾ hour in moderate oven. Beat well the whites of the eggs with a dessertspoon of sugar till very stiff, add a little flavouring. Pile over cake (when cooked), and put back into oven till cooked a golden brown.

half a cup of milk and dip slices of bread into the mixture and fry in deep fat. I do piles of this; it is my greatest butter-saver, and is always a prime favourite, with scrambled eggs, or bacon, or sausages—any breakfast dish.

I serve the beans on this fried bread —called French Toast in my house. The first time I served this (which, by the way, I thought up for myself), the family asked me how I managed to buy the baked beans! So it must taste like the old tinned favourite. I am going to try my hand at making spaghetti like this when I can get some.

I hope this will prove of interest to you, and now, as you say yourself, Cheerio! Yours sincerely, P.T.C., Karori.

Many thanks. I made this myself after reading your letter, and it is absolutely like REAL baked beans.

### Keeping Cut Pumpkin

Dear Aunt Daisy,

Many people, I know, must cut a pumpkin and find that it goes bad very quickly before they can use it all. I find that after scraping all the seeds out if I sprinkle it well with flour, the whole inside dries, and it keeps until all is used. Another good point is that those little flies that hang round vegetables do not touch it when floured. Hoping this hint will be useful.—One of Your Listeners (Waiuku).

### Speeding Up the Cooking

Dear Aunt Daisy,

I expect you were surprised at the peas not being soaked overnight in the recipe for Pease Pudding sent in by the Johnsonville Link. Well, for the last 25 years I have not soaked peas before cooking. I worked in a restaurant and found that the chef never soaked peas. The secret is to rinse them well to remove any dust, and then put them right into the boiling stock. They will boil down in about 1½ hours. Another wrinkle is this:—When in a hurry, put carrots, parsnips, etc., into soup whole, and your soup will not burn so easily. Then just before dishing up, you can lift these vegetables out, mash with a fork and return to soup. Bring to boil again, and you will find it just as nice as when they are grated, and without stirring all the time to prevent burning.—An Old Listener (Island Bay).