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PRUNES

WHILE we are waiting for fresh supplies of dried cake - fruits — sultanas, raisins and currants—prunes are assuming a greater importance, and I am often asked for a prune cake recipe. Here are two and also other recipes for prunes. Don't forget that the packets of Samoan dried bananas are very useful too—make up your recipe for date and walnut loaf, substituting the dried bananas for dates, using perhaps not quite so much sugar, as the bananas are very sweet. You will find it quite a nice change.

Another little hint: After soaking prunes overnight, stew them in rather weak tea (freshly made) instead of water. This makes a little difference to the flavour. Always add some lemon-juice or orange-juice. To make the prune-syrup richer, add a teaspoonful of good cornflour to the water for every pound of fruit.

Prune Velvet Cake

One and a-half cups of drained unsweetened cooked prunes; 1 cup shortening; 2 cups sugar; 4 eggs (separated); 3 cups flour; ½ teaspoon baking soda; 4 teaspoons baking powder; ½ teaspoon salt; 1 cup milk; 2 teaspoons vanilla. Measure prunes whole, then remove stones and slice finely. Work the shortening with a spoon, until fluffy and creamy, then gradually add 1½ cups sugar while still working until very light with a spoon. Add the egg-yolks and beat well until creamy. Then add the sifted dry ingredients (alternately, in thirds), with the milk, beating smooth after each addition. Add prunes and vanilla, and stir till well blended. Beat the egg-whites stiff but not dry, and add to them the remaining ½ cup sugar, little by little, beating well after each addition. Fold this into the batter lightly but thoroughly. Pour into 3 greased and floured sandwich-tins (8 inches). Bake in a moderate oven (about 375deg.) for about 30 to 35 minutes. Ice with orange-flavoured icing and sprinkle with shredded coconut or chopped nutmeg.

Prune Cake (one egg)

Five ounces of butter or good fat; 5oz. of sugar; 1 egg, pinch salt; pinch of ground cloves; 1½ cups of flour; ¾ teaspoon soda; 1½ teaspoons of cinnamon; 1½ teaspoons of mixed spice; 1 teaspoon baking powder; and ½lb. of prunes. Soak the prunes overnight; next day cook them till soft. Then stone them and let them drain. Cream the butter (or fat) and sugar; add the egg and then beat well. Add all the dry ingredients well sifted, then the prunes, which have been dredged with flour and cut up. Mix all well in, and if the mixture is too stiff add some of the prune-juice. Put all into a well-greased tin and bake for about ¾ to 1 hour in a moderate oven.

Prune Bread (American)

One cup uncooked prunes; 3 cups of flour; 4 teaspoons baking powder; ½ teaspoon baking soda; 1½ teaspoons salt; 2 tablespoons sugar; 4 tablespoons shortening; 2 tablespoons grated orange-rind; 2 eggs, beaten; 1 cup milk. Rinse the prunes, drain and dry on paper towel-ling. If the prunes are very dry, boil

them for 5 minutes. Remove stones and put the prunes through mincer, using medium blade. Sift together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and sugar. Cut in the shortening (or rub it in lightly). Add prunes and orange-rind and mix well. Combine eggs and milk, add to dry ingredients, and mix thoroughly. Pour into greased or oiled loaf-pan (about 10-inch by 5 by 3) and bake in moderate oven (about 350deg.). Should take about one hour.

Prune-Apple Betty

Four cups sliced apples; 2 cups stewed prunes (unsweetened and sliced); 2 cups soft breadcrumbs; ½ cup sugar; 1 teaspoon cinnamon (or ½ teaspoon nutmeg and ½ teaspoon cinnamon); pinch salt; 2 tablespoons lemon-juice; 4 tablespoons butter (or shortening). Arrange all the ingredients in layers in a greased casserole, finishing with breadcrumbs dotted with butter. Cover and bake in moderate oven (350deg.) for 1 hour; then remove lid and bake for 15 minutes longer. Serve with top milk or cream.

Spice Prune Puff

Soak overnight 2 cups prunes; next day drain off the water, and stew the prunes gently with 1 cup of sugar, 2 cups water; a little cinnamon, 4 cloves, the rind of half a lemon. When tender, in ½ to 1 hour, pour into a dish. Now for the PUFF TOP:

One cup of flour; 1 dessertspoon cinnamon; ½ teaspoon baking powder; 1-3 cup of butter or good dripping; ½ cup sugar; 1 egg; and about ½ cup of milk. Cream the butter and sugar, add the beaten egg, sift in lightly the flour, baking powder and cinnamon, and lastly mix in enough milk to make a mixture that will drop from the spoon. Spread over the prunes, and bake in a moderate oven about half an hour. While still hot, spread with a mixture of ½ teaspoon each of sugar, butter, cinnamon and flour. Serve hot or cold.

Prune and Nut Pudding

Two cups flour; ½ teaspoon salt; 1 teaspoon baking soda; 1 cup shredded suet; 2-3 cup chopped walnuts; 1 1-3 cups chopped prunes (unsweetened); 4 tablespoons grated orange rind; 2 eggs (well beaten); 1 cup milk; 1 cup molasses (if none at grocer's try the chemist, taking your own container). Sift together the flour, salt, and baking soda; combine the remaining ingredients and add to the first three. Mix all thoroughly together, and pour into a greased pudding-basin. Steam for 1½ to 2 hours. This makes a very large pudding, which you can re-heat by putting back into a basin and steaming again. Serve with custard sauce.

Prune and Apricot Pie

Line a 9-inch pie-plate with flakey pastry; sprinkle with 4 teaspoons flour; now combine 2¼ cups of cut-up stoned unsweetened cooked prunes, and ¾ cup cut-up unsweetened cooked dried apricots; and ¾ cup sugar. Arrange this mixture in the lined pie-plate. Combine 1½ teaspoons lemon juice, 2 tablespoons prune juice and 2 tablespoons apricot juice, and pour it over the fruit in the plate. Dot with butter, using 1½ table-spoonsful. Cover with a top crust of flakey pastry; and bake in a hot oven (425deg.) for about 35 to 40 minutes.

