

CHRISTMAS CAKES

HERE are some varied recipes for Christmas Cakes. The only difficulty with these for inexperienced home-makers is the cooking of them. The general rule is long, slow cooking, starting at medium heat and gradually decreasing. For a "pound cake" mixture with 8 eggs bake in electric oven for 4½ to 5 hours at 350 degrees, top element off, bottom low. For gas oven, put in at regulo 4 and after about one hour turn down to regulo 2. Place the cake a little below the middle of the oven. The time varies, however, with the depth of the cake. Smaller cakes take less time. A half-pound mixture takes 2½ to 3 hours. Any time given must be taken as a **GUIDE ONLY**. People's mixtures vary—eggs used may be larger or smaller; the beating, the shortening and the flour used, may all vary a little, as well as stoves and ovens, even with the thermostatic control. Do not continually open the oven door; but if the top of the cake begins to get too brown too soon, slip a piece of paper over it for protection. Test the cake with a straw from a stiff broom; if it comes out clean and not sticky the cake is done. Leave it to cool on a rack, and leave the paper on until the cake is to be cut. Many cooks advise to grease the cake-tin thoroughly, but not the paper, which should be double thickness; others grease both cake-tin and paper. Make a slight hollow in the middle of the cake-mixture before putting in the oven, so that it will rise evenly.

Cold Oven Christmas Cake

A well-known good cook, who uses gas, says she lights her oven and puts the cake right in at regulo 3 (that is 320 degrees electric). She puts it in the middle of the oven, and after 1½ hours turns the regulo to 2 (190 degrees in electric). After one more hour she turns to 0, and leaves it there till cooked, from 4 to 5 hours altogether, according to size.

Cooking Cakes Overnight

Some people have dared this method, and even slept trustfully the while. One Link put hers in an electric oven, half-way; turned on bottom element only to LOW, and left it all night. Very early next morning she found it perfectly cooked. Another put hers in gas oven, at regulo 1, at 11.0 p.m. At 5.0 a.m. she had a look, turned gas right off, leaving cake till she got up about 7.0, when it was perfectly done. Still another Link put in her cake at regulo 4 (350 degrees) at 8.0 p.m. At 10.0 p.m. (without opening oven door) she turned regulo to 2. At midnight she turned the gas right off and went to bed, leaving it in the oven. Thus the cake had 4 hours with heat on, and finished on stored heat.

Glycerine and Curry Powder

A teaspoon of glycerine beaten in with the butter helps to make the cake moist. A level teaspoon of curry powder

added to a fruit cake is said to have the same effect as brandy and to give a delicious flavour. A slight sprinkling of cayenne pepper has a similar effect. There is no need for any spirits.

Heat the Fruit

After the fruit is cleaned and mixed together, it may be put on a dish or plate and made quite hot in the oven.

Dark Christmas Cake

This one has been successfully sent overseas. It makes a 7lb cake: One lb. flour, ¾lb. butter, ¾lb. each of raisins, sultanas, currants and sugar, ½lb. candied lemon peel, 6 eggs, ¼lb. almonds, 1 small teaspoon baking soda, ¼lb. walnuts, ½ teaspoon salt, 1 tablespoon treacle, 6 level tablespoons black currant jam (the secret of the cake) and ½lb. preserved ginger (if possible). Cream butter and sugar very thoroughly; beat eggs one by one and add separately. Next add flour, baking soda and salt sifted together. Then work in the fruit, treacle, and lastly black currant jam. Grease tin well, line with paper, bake 3½ to 4 hours.

Favourite Christmas Cake

Prepare 2lb. mixed fruit, sprinkle with flour, and put in oven to warm. Also sift 10ozs. flour and put to warm a little. Cream together thoroughly ½lb. butter and ½lb. sugar. Add 5 eggs one at a time, beating well, and sprinkling in a little flour with each egg to prevent curdling. Add ½ teaspoon each of these essences—vanilla, lemon, pineapple, brandy, cherry, almond. Next add ½ teaspoon curry powder. Finally add the remainder of the flour and the fruit alternately, and the baking powder last. Turn mixture into well greased tin. Bake 3½ to 4 hours; oven 300 degrees, decreasing after 1 hour (as above).

Safe Christmas Cake

Half a pound each of butter, sugar, raisins, currants and sultanas; 10ozs. flour; 5 eggs; 2oz. each chopped figs, cherries, peel, dates, preserved ginger, almonds. May omit any one of these if liked. Mix as above. Cook 3 to 4 hours.

£100 Prize Christmas Cake

One lb. butter, 1lb. sugar, 1¼lb. flour; ½ to 1 teaspoon baking powder; 1½lb. sultanas; 1lb. currants; ½lb. seeded raisins; ¼lb. glace cherries; 6ozs. almonds; 2 ozs citron peel; 2 tablespoons orange marmalade; grated rind and juice of 1 lemon; grated rind of 1 orange; 8 eggs, saltspoon salt; ½ cup of brandy, if available. Prepare fruit previous day. Blanch almonds, cut in two lengthways. Shred citron peel and grate orange and lemon-rind. Place all together in a basin, and pour over lemon juice and brandy. Cover till needed. Blend butter and sugar till quite smooth. Add eggs, one at a time, using a little of the weighed and sifted flour to prevent curdling. Add fruit, etc., and flour mixed with salt, a little at a time. Have oven tin ready with 4 folds of white paper lining. Pour in mixture, hollow slightly, and bake very slowly for 6

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