

Simnel Cake



Simnel cake is very much like a lighter version of Christmas cake. Dotted with juicy fruit and fragranced with a dash of cinnamon it's perfect for any celebration, but you need to like marzipan to enjoy it, there's lots of it – on the top – our favourite part, the seam of gooeyness in the centre.

There probably isn't an authentic recipe left in existence as our research found a multitude of different ones using varying quantities of fruit and even nuts, but we've put together one that appeals to our tastes.

Ingredients

- 225g butter, softened
- 225g sugar
- 4 eggs
- 225g plain flour
- 335g dried mixed fruit
- 110g glacé cherries, quartered
- grated zest of 2 lemons
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 450g almond paste
- 2 tbsp orange marmalade
- 1 egg, beaten

Method

Pre-heat oven to 150°C /Gas 2.

Butter a 20cm diameter deep round cake tin. Line with the bottom and sides with baking parchment making sure you leave a collar of paper sticking above the rim of the tin.

Place the butter, sugar, eggs, flour, mixed dried fruit, glacé cherries, lemon zest and cinnamon in a large mixing bowl and beat together until thoroughly blended

Place half the mixture into the cake tin and smooth over the surface.

Take one-third of the almond paste and roll it out into a circle the size of the tin. Place it on top of the cake mixture. Spoon the remaining cake mixture over and smooth the surface.

Bake the cake for about 2 hours 30 minutes until well risen and firm to the touch. Cover with foil after 1 hour if the top is browning too quickly. Allow the cake to cool in the tin for 10 minutes before turning out on to a wire rack to cool completely.

When the cake has cooled, brush the top with the warmed marmalade and roll out half of the remaining almond paste to fit the top. Press firmly on the top and crimp the edges to decorate.

Mark a criss-cross pattern on the almond paste with a sharp knife. Form the remaining almond paste into 11 balls (to represent the 11 disciples). Arrange the balls around the outside.

Preheat the grill. Brush the marzipan with a little of the beaten egg. Place the cake under the preheated grill to turn the almond paste golden. Keep an eye on it and turn the cake around to prevent burning.