

SIMNEL CAKE

Ingredients:

- One 4-ounce container red or green candied cherries, quartered ($\frac{2}{3}$ cup)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup candied fruit and peel mix, excluding any cherries therein
- $1\frac{1}{3}$ cup golden raisins
- 1 cup dried currants
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup brandy
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- 4 eggs
- $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups self-rising flour
- 2 tablespoons lemon zest
- 2 teaspoons ground allspice
- 1 pound almond paste (marzipan), divided into thirds
- 2 tablespoons apricot jam or preserves
- 1 egg

The Night Before Baking:

Place the candied cherries and the candied peel mix into a mesh strainer, and pour over boiling water to rinse the syrup off. Drain well in strainer, then on a clean dish towel or paper towel.

Place the raisins and currants in a heatproof bowl and cover with boiling water. Let stand for 15 minutes (to plump), then drain well and dry on towels.

Place all of the drained fruits in a bowl and pour the brandy over. Cover the bowl and let the fruit soak overnight.

Bake Day:

Preheat the oven to 300°. Butter an eight inch round spring-form pan. Cut a round of wax paper to fit the bottom of the pan, and butter the paper. Then, dust the entire pan with the buttered paper in the bottom with flour.

Cream the butter and brown sugar in the bowl of an electric mixer. Beat the eggs in one at a time, mixing to incorporate after each addition. Stir the self-rising flour into the batter. Stir the soaked fruits with the brandy into the batter, along with the lemon zest and allspice. Pour one-half of this batter into the prepared pan.

Roll out one third of the marzipan into an eight inch circle, and place this over the batter in the pan. Pour the remaining batter over the layer of marzipan.

Bake in the 300° oven for 1½ hours, or until the cake tests done. (A toothpick or metal skewer inserted into the center of the cake should come out clean, with only small dry bits of cake clinging to it.) Let the cake cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then remove the sides of the pan and let the cake cool completely. Set the oven to broil and move the rack to a position in the oven so the cake will be about eight inches from the broiler.

Warm the apricot jam or preserves in a small saucepan, then spread over the top of the cake. Roll out one third of the marzipan into another eight inch circle, and place this over the top of the cake. Beat the third egg and brush this over the surface of the marzipan. With your hands, roll the last third of the marzipan into eleven balls (representing the Twelve Disciples minus Judas). Place the balls in a circle about one inch inside the circumference of the top of the cake, and then brush them with the beaten egg.

Place the cake under the broiler to brown the top surface of the cake, watching like a hawk!

Submitted by: Brian Reid from St. George's Episcopal Church, New Orleans. Brian has contributed recipes that have appeared in The Times-Picayune and other local publications.