

Nutty Fruitcake:

16 oz. dried fruits (apricots, cherries, cranberries, etc.), chopped as needed for size

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup rum

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup orange juice

3 cups all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons cinnamon

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground nutmeg

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground allspice

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground cloves

1- $\frac{3}{4}$ cups packed brown sugar

$\frac{3}{4}$ -1 cup unsalted butter, softened

4 eggs

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup molasses

8 oz. pitted dates, snipped

1 cup white raisins

1 cup dark raisins

4 cups nuts (slivered almonds, pecan halves, walnuts)

Directions:

1. *The night before:* Put dried fruit into a tupperware container, and pour in the rum and orange juice. (Could add raisins to this as well.) Let macerate overnight.
2. Before making the fruitcake, drain the macerated fruit, capturing the liquid. Set aside $\frac{1}{4}$ of the liquid for use after baking, and save the rest for the batter.
3. Adjust oven rack to middle position and preheat to 300°. Grease three 8" loaf pans or two 10" loaf pans. (Optionally, line with brown paper.)
4. Cream butter and sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, beating after each and scraping down the bowl.
5. Whisk together the flour, baking powder, salt, and spices. Add to the batter along with the molasses. Mix together on low until combined.
6. Pour in the liquid drained from the fruit (except for the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup reserved for later use); mix into the batter on low until combined.
7. Add the drained macerated fruit, along with the dates and raisins. Mix together on low until combined, scraping the bowl as needed.
8. Add the nuts and mix together on low until combined. Remove the bowl from the mixer and use a spoon or spatula to make sure the nuts and fruit are evenly distributed throughout the batter.

9. Divide the batter evenly into the prepared pans. Bake at 300° for 2 hours or until the cakes test done (a toothpick inserted in the center should come out clean). After the first hour, cover the pans loosely with foil to prevent over-browning. (Alternate directions: Bake at 250° or 275° for a longer time, 2-4 hours, until done; optionally place a pan of hot water on the shelf below the cake while baking.)
10. Remove the pans and set on a wire rack to cool. Brush the tops with the reserved liquid. Let the cakes cool completely, then remove from the pans.
11. Wrap each cake in cheesecloth moistened with wine, rum, or brandy, then wrap in foil (or plastic). (Alternate directions: use orange juice, or mix rum with orange juice, as the moistening liquid.) Store in refrigerator for 3 weeks or more, moistening the cheesecloth as needed each week (or more often if needed). (Alternate directions: wrap tightly in plastic and store at room temperature for up to 8 weeks.)