

Rory O'Connell Recipes

Almond and Orange Cake

This flourless almond and orange cake was inspired by a trip to the lovely island of Majorca where both oranges and almonds grow in abundance. The cake rises in the cooking and falls a little in the cooling to achieve a lovely tender texture. The cake keeps really well and I think it is appropriate served as an afternoon tea cake or after dinner.

I add a few drops of orange extract to the cake to elevate the flavour, but the cake will still be lovely without the addition of this intensely flavoured liquid. You can of course buy the extract, but making your own is rather easy as you

just soak thinly pared orange rinds in a flavourless alcohol such as vodka. After that you just need patience as the rinds need at least a week to release their flavour into the alcohol.

The cake is iced with a simple butter and cream cheese icing into which I push candied orange slices. These crisp and deliciously flavoured thins are not difficult to make but they do require plenty of time to dry out properly. Patience seems to be a recurring theme with this cake! Undoubtedly a dehydrator is the best piece of equipment for drying the oranges, but a conventional or fan oven will also produce a good result.

I have a domestic version of the dehydrator in my kitchen and I find it very useful. I use it to dry some herbs, fruit, vegetables, flowers and so on. Of course it is one more piece of equipment taking up valuable counter top in kitchens that are already limited for space, but I would not be without my machine. I pop it (which is very light and easy to lift) in a cupboard when not in use. If you look at the machine as a vehicle for preserving food, then making the decision to buy one might be easier.

Serves 8

Cake

A little melted butter for preparing the cake tin 5 eggs 200g caster sugar 200g ground almonds Finely grated zest of 1 orange 1 teaspoon orange extract

Cake icing

50g butter at room temperature, but not oily and greasy 110g cream cheese chilled
180g icing sugar Zest of 1 orange

To decorate

4 mint leaves 16 candied orange slices optional

Method

Preheat the oven to 170c / 325f / gas mark 3

Brush the sides and base of a 23cm cake tin with melted butter. Line the base of the tin with a disc of parchment paper.

Separate the eggs placing the whites in a spotlessly clean bowl and the yolks in another bowl. Add the caster sugar to the yolks and using an electric hand whisk, beat to a pale, light and creamy consistency. Fold in the almonds, orange zest and extract. At this point the mixture will appear a little heavy.

Whisk the egg whites to a soft yet firm peak. Mix a quarter of the egg whites into the yolks and then carefully but thoroughly, fold in the remaining egg whites. The two mixtures will resist each other for a moment or two but gradually become a single soft, light and air-filled consistency. Pour the mixture into the cake tin and gently smooth over the top.

Place in the pre-heated oven and cook for 35-40 minutes. The cooked cake will be golden in colour and coming away slightly from the edge of the tin. You can also test to ensure the cake is cooked by inserting a skewer into the cake. Retract the skewer and if clean, then the cake is cooked.

Place the cake still in the tin on a wire rack to cool for 15 minutes. Gently run a table knife around the edge of the tin and turn the cake out and allow to cool completely on the wire rack paper side down.

For the icing, place the butter in a bowl and whisk to a creamy consistency. Add the cream cheese and whisk until smooth. Gradually whisk in the icing sugar until all is incorporated. Add the orange zest and stir briefly.

Your second And you also want to recommend another dessert using oranges?

I would also suggest an Orange Granita which is semi-frozen dessert made from sugar. It sounds very fancy but actually simple to make. It is base an ice filled with delicious icy orange crystals. No fancy equipment required just a little room in the freezer. This will appeal to young and old.

Blood Oranges are revered in Italy for their juice and regarded as a tonic at a low time of the year. They are also readily available in the shops at the moment.

2. Blood Orange Granita

Blood Oranges are in season for the months of December, January and February and I like to use them as much as possible then. This granita is simple and refreshing. The blood orange can be replaced with bright oranges at any time of the year and indeed with grapefruit, either marsh or ruby. The granita can be served as a refreshing and light starter or as a dessert. I sometimes pair it with an orange flavoured posset for a delicious bright winter dessert.

Serves 6-8

450ml Blood orange juice freshly squeezed

150g Caster sugar

Mix the strained juice and sugar and whisk well ensuring that the sugar has completely dissolved. Place in a container in the freezer. Once the mixture is half frozen, remove and break up the semi-frozen ice crystals with a fork or a whisk. Replace in the freezer and repeat the process three or four times. You want to achieve a loose and slightly flaky ice.

Cover and store in freezer until ready to serve.

Now that we're in Lockdown 3 you have a new obsession in the kitchen. What is it?

My new obsession is making marmalade - the "new Banana Bread". I have a recipe for Marmalade Tart.

3. Marmalade Tart

Serves 8

8ozs / 225g plain flour

pinch salt

5ozs / 140g butter

2 teasp. castor sugar

1 egg yolk

Filling;

4ozs (110g/2 sticks) butter

4ozs (110g/½ cup) castor sugar

2ozs (55g/generous ½ cup) ground almonds

1 large egg, beaten

4 tablesp. marmalade

Set the oven to 180c

Sieve the flour and salt into a mixing bowl and rub in butter with your finger tips until the mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Stir in the sugar. Beat the egg yolk with 2 teaspoons of cold water. Use to bind the pastry, adding a little more water if necessary to form a tender but not sticky dough. Knead for a few seconds on a lightly floured surface until smooth, wrap in grease-proof paper and chill for at least 30 minutes.

Roll out on a lightly floured surface and use to line an 8 inch (20.5cm) loose bottomed, fluted flan ring. Prick the base of the pastry lightly with a fork, cover with a disc of greaseproof paper. The paper should be pushed right down into the bottom of the tin and come about 2cm proud of the top. Fill with baking beans right up to the top to keep the base down and the sides up and bake blind for 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and discard the paper and beans.

Meanwhile prepare the filling. Beat the butter and sugar together until pale and creamy, then mix in the ground almonds and egg. Warm the marmalade slightly and then sieve it to separate the rinds from the jelly. Reserve the jelly and stir the rinds into the almond mixture.

Turn the prepared filling into the pastry case. Smooth over the top and bake the flan for 20 minutes or until golden brown and gently set. Glaze the tart by painting on the reserved jelly.

This tart is delicious hot, warm or cold.

Serve with softly whipped cream.