

CHRISTMAS PUDDING

225g soft white breadcrumbs
55g plain flour
225g chopped suet
225g raisins
225g sultanas
225g currants
50g mixed peel
50g citron peel
60g ground almonds

225g demerara sugar
1 tsp mixed spice
zest and juice of 1 lemon
4 eggs
150ml brandy
150ml rum
225g chopped apple
pinch salt
1 tsp grated nutmeg

Method

Put all the ingredients in a large mixing bowl and combine thoroughly with clean hands. Leave overnight.

Transfer to a greased 1.2 litre pudding bowl with a sheet of greaseproof paper lining the bottom (this is to prevent sticking).

Cover the top with greaseproof paper and a layer of tin foil. Secure with string.

Steam in a large covered saucepan, half-filled with boiling water, for four hours, topping up with boiling water as necessary. Remove, allow it to cool and store in a cool place.

On Christmas Day, steam again for two and a half hours.

CARROT CAKE WITH A CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

250g chopped pecans
300g Demerara sugar
110g granulated sugar
230ml vegetable oil 4 large eggs
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
300g plain flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 and 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
250g grated carrots

Cream Cheese Frosting

450g full-fat cream cheese, softened to room temperature
120g soft unsalted butter
480g icing sugar
1 and 1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
pinch of salt, to taste

Method

Make the cake: Preheat oven to 300°F (149°C). Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat. Spread the chopped pecans on the sheet and toast for 7-8 minutes. Remove from the oven and allow to cool for 10-15 minutes.

Turn the oven up to 180 degrees. Grease two or three 9-inch cake pans, line with parchment paper rounds, then grease the parchment paper.

Whisk the brown sugar, granulated sugar, oil, eggs and vanilla together in a large bowl until combined and no brown sugar lumps remain. In another large bowl, whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg, and cloves together. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and, using a rubber spatula or wooden spoon, fold the ingredients together until just combined. Fold in the carrots and half of the toasted pecans. (The rest of the pecans are for garnish.)

Pour/spoon the batter evenly into the cake pans. If using three cake pans, bake for 20-24 minutes. If using two cake pans, bake for 30-35 minutes. Test the center with a toothpick. If it comes out clean, the cakes are done. If not, continue to bake until cooked through. Do not over-bake. Allow the cakes to cool completely in the pans set on a wire rack. The cakes must be completely cool before frosting and assembling.

Make the frosting: In a small large bowl using a handheld or stand mixer fitted with a whisk or paddle attachment, beat the cream cheese and butter together on medium-high speed until smooth, about 2 minutes.

Add the confectioners' sugar, vanilla extract, and a pinch of salt. Beat on low speed for 30 seconds, then increase to high speed and beat for 3 minutes until completely combined and creamy. Add more confectioners' sugar if frosting is too thin, a little milk if frosting is too thick, or an extra pinch of salt if frosting is too sweet. Frosting should be soft, but not runny.

Assemble and frost: First, using a large serrated knife or cake leveler, layer off the tops of the cakes to create a flat surface. Place 1 cake layer on your cake turntable, cake stand, or serving plate. Evenly cover the top with frosting. Top with 2nd layer, more frosting, and then top with the 3rd layer. Spread remaining frosting all over the top and sides. Decorate the sides and top of the cake with the remaining toasted pecans.