

DATE, GINGER & WALNUT FRUIT CAKE, ENRICHED WITH YOUR FAVOURITE HAKANOVA SYRUP - DELICIOUSLY MOIST & GORGEOUSLY FESTIVE.

Juice & zest of 1 lemon (or orange)

300g grated fresh pears - toss with the juice and zest to prevent browning. Your fruit should be washed but not peeled. May be substituted with apples, or carrots, or courgettes.

500g roughly chopped dates

300g roughly chopped glace ginger (naked ginger or crystallised ginger are fine too)

NOTE - This makes for a very gingery cake, but the long slow cooking process mellows the ginger a lot, so it's really not too much. However, you can make a gorgeous variation using pineapple- see the recipe section on our website to download that version.

250g butter

250g raw sugar

1 tbsp blackstrap molasses (golden syrup or treacle will do)

3 tbsp Hakanoa Spicy Chai concentrate (can be substituted with ANY Hakanoa syrup - Golden Latte is my next favourite, but they all work; Ginger, Ginger Lemon Honey, Classic Chai etc

HEAT ALL THE ABOVE TOGETHER IN A LARGE SAUCEPAN, stirring gently and often. When it starts to simmer, then add

150ml Whiskey (or rum, or Madeira or dry sherry, or strong black tea)

150 grams roughly chopped walnuts

and continue stirring at a gentle simmer for 10 minutes.

Add 1 tbsp cornflour, stir well, then pour the mixture into a large mixing bowl to cool.

While you're waiting, get these ready;

4 eggs - beaten together

250g plain flour, sifted with;

3/4 tsp baking powder

3/4 tsp baking soda

Pre-heat the oven to 135c on fan bake.

Line 2 loaf pans with double layers of baking paper, with at least 20cm of paper hanging over the long sides of the pans * see note below

Add 1/3 of the sifted flour mixture to the bowl and stir well until blended in, then add half the beaten eggs and stir well, then another 1/3 of the flour, stirring well, then the eggs, then the last of the flour, making sure each round is well stirred in before adding the next.

Divide the mixture evenly between the pans, to about 3/4 deep.

Get the 2 sides of the paper, put a narrow fold at the meeting edge, and tuck the edges loosely into the tin. Keep the paper clear of the top of the cake mixture, it should be like a tent over the top.

Put the loaf tins on a baking tray, and put in the oven, Bake for 10 mins, then turn the heat down to 110c. Bake for a further 2.5 hours. Test with a skewer, checking if it comes out of the cake clean, to make sure the cakes are cooked. Cool in the pans for 10 mins, then turn out onto a rack to cool. Leave the paper on them. Store in airtight container.

* Now, you can bake the cake in one big pan, but it's so good that I struggle to keep the cake untouched until Christmas. If you want to make 1 big square or round cake, you will need to extend the cooking time by 1 hour.

I make it in 2 loaf pans. That's one we can eat now and one wrapped up ready and waiting for actual Christmas.

I line the pans with 2 layers of baking paper (or 1 of baking paper and 1 of brown paper - I recycle paper bags for this bit) with a lot of overhang that I can fold and tuck over the pans once filled. This creates a little steam around the cakes and stops them from drying out.

I usually make up a couple of muffin cups with deep lining too, which cook in about 40 minutes, so we can eat them like tiny steamed puddings after dinner. Our home smells like Christmas for hours when these are baking, so we can't wait to try them out!

Serving suggestions;

Served warm with icecream or custard on the side, trickled with a little Hakanoa Ginger Syrup.

Thin slices served with a fine cheese, slices of fresh pear, fresh walnuts and a small glass of dry sherry - pure heaven.

or, for the very indulgent, butter each slice sparingly on both sides, then fry until warmed through and starting to crisp. Add a couple of fat slices of banana to brown in the pan if you have some. Serve with a dollop of chilled Marscapone or Stracchino cheese, and a trickle of Hakanoa Ginger Syrup.