

# Heritage Recipes

You can share old family recipes and traditions

## Ethel's Fancy Dark Fruit Cake

From Sonja

My mother-in-law Ethel Maybelle had a Christmas tradition that she made a fruitcake for each of her 13 children. Buying the ingredients was a principal seasonal undertaking, her plan of attack launched with scribbled shopping lists and major budgeting of her always skimpy finances. Between stirring up huge amounts of batter, she would be on the phone giving advice to dozens of friends and neighbors who were always calling. I love this cake warm from the oven, so I always make a small loaf for instant snacking with a cup of coffee when I do my annual Christmas baking. Even people who don't like fruitcake seem to like my mother-in-law's version. She usually cured it with bourbon or a fine wine. After curing, this cake will fill a room with its wonderful aroma when the cake tin is opened.

### Ethel's Fancy Dark Fruit Cake

#### Ingredients:

2 3/4 cups sifted all-purpose flour  
3 large eggs  
1/2 cup jam  
1 cup butter  
1 cup sugar  
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1 cup chopped dates  
1 cup raisins  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon  
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves  
1/4 teaspoon allspice  
2 tablespoons bourbon or Tennessee sipping whiskey  
1/2 cup candied orange peel

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1/2 cup candied lemon peel  
1/2 cup candied cherries  
1/2 cup candied pineapple  
2 cups mixed candied fruits  
1/2 cup sorghum molasses  
1/2 cup broken pecan meats  
1/2 cup black walnuts  
1 cup English walnuts (or 1 1/2 cups walnuts if you can't get black walnuts)  
1/2 cup chopped dried figs  
1/2 cup applesauce or apple butter  
optional: 1/2 cup chopped brazil nuts

Grease and line with waxed paper one large tube cake pan and one small loaf pan. Sift 2 1/4 cup flour with baking powder, salt, and spices and set aside. Reserve 1/2 cup of the flour for flouring the fruits and nuts. Cream butter with sugar in A VERY LARGE MIXING BOWL. One at a time, add eggs. Mix well after each addition. Add 1/2 cup jam, 1/2 cup sorghum molasses, and 1/2 cup applesauce or apple butter. Stir well. Add vanilla extract and the 2 tablespoons bourbon or whiskey. By thirds, add flour mixture to butter-sugar-egg mixture, stirring well after each addition. Put together in large bowl all the nuts and fruits. Use the reserved flour to flour fruit and nuts. Slowly stir the combined, floured fruits and nuts into the cake batter, mixing well to coat. Turn batter into greased tube pan and loaf pan.

Bake at 300 degrees for 1 hour and 15 minutes or until cake is brown and bounces back when touched in the center. Loaf cake will be done faster than the tube cake. Check loaf cake for doneness after about 55 minutes. When done, turn cakes out onto wire rack to cool.

Wrap cooled tube pan cake in cheesecloth. Tuck a peeled apple in the center of the cake and sprinkle cheesecloth wrappings and apple with 1 or 2 tablespoons of chosen liquor for ripening. Place wrapped, sprinkled cake in fruit cake tin and seal. Set aside to ripen for two to six weeks.

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Once a week, open the tin and sprinkle cake with 1 teaspoon of chosen liquor. Slice loaf cake and serve immediately with coffee, tea, a glass of wine, or a favorite dessert liqueur. Loaf cake may also be served cold as a snack. Recipe makes one loaf cake and one approximately 5- to 6-and-1/2-pound tube cake.

Do not be overly generous with liquor when curing the cake. Too much liquor sprinkled on the cake will make the crumb tough and bitter.

The peeled, cored apple stuffed into the center hole of the cake will tenderize and ripen the fruitcake. Discard the apple after three weeks. The apple may look a little moldy by then, but it won't harm the cake. Keep cake sealed when not serving.

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