

# Sledmere Classic Christmas Cake



Serves 14-16 people

## Tips

If you like, you can replace half of the glacé cherries with dried apricots. You can also replace up to 75g of the currants with mixed candied peel. For a zestier flavour, use half orange zest and half lemon zest.

## Ingredients

- 350g glacé cherries, halved, rinsed, and dried
- 920g mixed dried fruit
- 150ml brandy, plus extra for feeding
- 2 oranges, zest only
- 250g butter, softened
- 250g light or dark muscovado sugar
- 4 large free-range eggs, at room temperature
- 1 tbsp black treacle
- 75g blanched almonds, chopped
- 275g plain flour
- 1½ tsp mixed spice
- 3 tbsp apricot jam, warmed and sieved
- icing sugar
- 675g marzipan
- 3 free-range eggs, whites only
- 675g icing sugar, sifted
- 3 tsp lemon juice
- 1½ tsp glycerine

## Preparation

1. Place all the dried fruit, including the cherries, into a large mixing bowl, pour over the brandy and stir in the orange zest. Cover with clingfilm and leave to soak for three days, stirring daily.
2. Grease and line a 9" deep, round tin with a layer of greased greaseproof paper. Preheat the oven to 140C.

3. Measure the butter, eggs, treacle, sugar and almonds into a large bowl and mix well. Add the flour and ground spice and mix thoroughly. Stir in the soaked fruit. Spoon into the prepared cake tin and level.
4. Bake in the center of the preheated oven for about 4 hours, or until the cake is golden brown and feels firm to the touch. After two hours, cover with foil. A skewer inserted into the centre of the cake should come out clean. Leave the cake to cool in the tin.
5. When cool, pierce the cake at intervals with a fine skewer and feed with a little more brandy. When completely cold wrap in a double layer of greaseproof paper and again in foil and store in a cool place for two to three months, feeding at intervals with more brandy. (Don't remove the lining paper when storing as this helps to keep the cake moist.)
6. For the covering, stand the cake upside down, flat side uppermost, on a cake board which is 2in larger than the size of the cake.
7. Brush the sides and the top of the cake with the warm apricot jam.
8. Dust a work surface with icing sugar and then roll out the marzipan to about 2in larger than the surface of the cake. Keep moving the marzipan as you roll, checking that it is not sticking to the work surface.
9. Lift the marzipan over the cake using a rolling pin. Ease the marzipan down the sides of the cake, smoothing it at the same time. If you are careful, you

should be able to cover the cake with no excess marzipan to trim but, if necessary, neatly trim. Cover the cake loosely with baking parchment and leave for a few days to dry out before adding the royal icing.

10. For the royal icing, whisk the egg whites in a large bowl until they become frothy. Mix in the sifted icing sugar a tablespoonful at a time. You can do this with a hand-held electric whisk, but keep the speed low. Stir in the lemon juice and glycerine and beat the icing until it is very stiff and white and stands up in peaks.
11. Cover the surface of the icing tightly with clingfilm and keep in a cool place until needed.
12. To ice the cake, place all the icing onto the top of the cake. Spread evenly over the top and sides of the cake with a palette knife. For a snow-peak effect, use a smaller palette knife to rough up the icing.
13. Leave the cake loosely covered overnight for the icing to harden a little, then wrap or store in an airtight container in a cool place until needed.