

Mary Ball Washington's 1784 Gingerbread Cake

Ingredients

½ cup butter softened
½ cup dark brown sugar
1 cup dark molasses
½ cup warm milk
2 tablespoons ground ginger
1 ½ teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon mace
1 teaspoon nutmeg
¼ cup brandy
3 eggs
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 orange
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 tablespoons warm water
1 cup seedless raisins

Instructions

1. Using an electric mixer, cream butter and sugar in a mixing bowl until light and fluffy.
2. Measure out molasses, milk, ginger, cinnamon, mace, nutmeg and brandy in a different bowl. Add to creamed sugar and butter. Mix well.
3. Whisk (or beat) eggs until fluffy in a separate bowl.
4. Sift flour and cream of tartar in another bowl.
5. Add eggs and flour, alternately, to the batter. Keep electric mixer on low until all the eggs and flour is added.
6. Zest and juice an orange in another bowl. Add juice and zest to batter and continue to lightly mix. (note: don't skimp on the orange. Every little bit of juice and zest is needed to cut the richness of the molasses.)
7. Dissolve baking soda in warm water in another small bowl or cup. Add to batter and mix by hand.
8. Mix raisins with a small amount of flour in a different bowl. This will keep the raisins from sinking to the bottom of the batter. Add flour-coated raisins to the batter and gently stir in by hand.
9. Pour batter into a greased and lightly floured 9x13 pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes or until an inserted toothpick comes out clean. Let cool in pan for 10-15 minutes, then turn out onto cooling rack. Cool completely before serving.