



Franklin Cake

Featured on January 5, 2018 for “Forgotten Foods: Finding and Testing Recipes from our Archives” demo with Ashley Rose Young, Ph.D.

The following recipe for “Franklin Cake,” a spice cake, is a modern adaptation of a nineteenth-century recipe. The recipe, recorded by Maria Bourne c. 1870, is from a handwritten recipe book that is part of the Robinson and Via Family Papers at the National Museum of American History Archives Center. Take a step back into history with this fascinating and tasty dessert from our archives!

Franklin Cake (Smithsonian interpretation)

Makes 36 “cakes”

Ingredients

2 cups molasses
1 cup milk
8 oz butter
6 oz brown sugar
3 tablespoons ground ginger
1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg (preground is fine)
7 eggs
1 lb 2 oz flour
2 lemons, zest and juice
1/3 cup of powdered sugar

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Butter queen cake tins if using, or spray cupcake pan.

In a large bowl over a water bath, measure out molasses, milk, and butter. Warm only until butter melts. Remove bowl from heat. In a bowl, measure and whisk together brown sugar, ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and freshly grated nutmeg. Add to molasses mixture. In a bowl, beat eggs until light (there should be a definite color change due to the all the air beaten into it). Stir in the flour and eggs into the molasses by alternative the dry in three additions, and the eggs in two additions, starting and ending with the dry. Stir until just combined. Zest and juice the lemons and stir into batter.

Fill molds of choice $\frac{1}{4}$ inch below the rim. If using cupcake pan use liners or spray well for easy removal.

Start timer at 14-17 minutes, depending on your oven. Bake until cakes spring back or cake tester comes clean. Allow to cool in mold before unmolding. Plate cakes and finish with a dusting of powdered sugar.

Recipe for Franklin Cake in Maria Bourne's manuscript cookbook, c. 1872

A pint of molasses, half a pint of milk, and cut up in it half a pound of butter. Warm just enough to melt the butter and then stir in six oz of brown sugar, adding three table spoonfuls of ginger, a table-spoonful of powdered cinnamon, a tea-spoonful of powdered cloves[,] a grated nutmeg. Beat seven eggs very light, stir them gradually into the mixture in turn with a pound & two oz of flour. Add at the last the grated peel and juice of two lemons or 12 drops pf ess. of lemon[.] Stir very hard, bake in well-buttered tins.

- Note: Maria Bourne's recipe for Franklin Cake is similar to one found in *Directions for Cookery* (1851). One difference between the recipes is Maria's use of lemons or lemon essence (eliminating the option for oranges). Maria's recipe also omits directions for the use of "queen-cake" tins, "West Indian" molasses, and a "moderate" oven.

"Original" recipe for Franklin Cake in Miss Leslie's *Directions for Cookery* (1851)

Mix together a pint of molasses, and a half a pint of milk, and cut up in it half a pound of butter. Warm them just enough to melt the butter, and then stir in six ounces of brown sugar; adding three table-spoonfuls of ginger, a table-spoonful of powdered cinnamon, a tea-spoonful of powdered cloves, and a grated nutmeg. Beat seven eggs very light, and stir them gradually into the mixture, in turn with a pound and two ounces of flour. Add, at the last, the grated peel and juice of two large lemons or oranges; the peel grated very fine. This gingerbread requires no pearl-ash. Stir the mixture very hard; put it into little queen-cake tins, well buttered; and bake it in a moderate oven. It is best the second day, and will keep soft a week. Use West Indian molasses.



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