That prize winning fruit cake

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It is the ambition of most women to make the perfect fruit cake. Some try over and over again, hoping that some day they will produce a prize-winning cake.

People often wonder, when viewing exhibits in a Show, why exhibit "A" was awarded first prize while exhibit "B," which looks so much better, was passed over.

Many points are taken into consideration by the judges. If intending exhibitors examine each of these in turn they will be able to see where some of the marks have been lost.

The General Appearance is the first thing that catches the judge's eye. She will look for a rich, well-baked cake, rich brown in colour, well shaped, and attractively served.

The Shape of the Cake:
The sides and underneath of the cake should be the same shape as the tin. The top should be very slightly rounded with an unbroken surface.
A cake which bursts or cracks on the top has usually been in too hot an oven.
Bursting is also sometimes caused by too much self-raising flour in the mixture. One part by weight of self-raising flour to four of parts plain flour is enough for a rich fruit cake.
The tins must be carefully lined with paper. A big cake should have three layers of brown paper and an inner layer of greaseproof paper.
See that lining paper fits closely against the tin. A dent in the paper will cause a dent in the cake, spoiling the appearance. These layers protect the surface, preventing it from becoming too brown. Some
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To Cut the Lining Paper:

Cut layers of paper to fit the base of the tin. Remove a thin strip around the edge to allow for the thickness of the side lining paper.

Cut side lining paper to fit around the sides of the tin, with a slight overlap. The paper should reach beyond the rim after the tin is lined, and an extra inch should be allowed for folding and fitting under the base lining.

Take the side strips and fold over one inch along the lower edges. Slit with the scissors (slantwise), as illustrated.

Grease the greaseproof layer and line the tin, doing the sides before the base. See that all lining paper is pressed well against the tin with no dents.

Lining paper is usually left on the cake until it is iced or until it is to be cut for eating.

All traces of paper should be removed before serving. Care is necessary in doing this as it is easy to break off a small piece of cake or a sultana in the process.

TO EXHIBIT A CAKE

The cake should be presented on a plate which is slightly larger than the cake. There should be a paper doyley on the plate and there should be no stray crumbs in evidence.

Show stewards often make provision for cardboard plates and paper doyleys, but the exhibitor to see that the cake is well presented, and has a clean fresh appearance.

It is advisable to cover the whole exhibit with clear plastic or cellophane as a protection against dust and flies.

THE TEXTURE

The judge will then proceed to cut the cake and examine the texture, which should be fine and even. She will also sample the cake by tasting it. Although she does not know who you are, it is simply amazing what she will learn about you, and what goes on in your kitchen, in these brief minutes. Perhaps there are air-bubbles in the cake? This indicates the use of too much self raising flour, or that the mixture may not have been mixed together thoroughly.

The fruit should be distributed evenly through the mixture.

If the proportions of all ingredients are correct, the mixture when ready for the oven should be stiff enough to support the mixing spoon in an upright position. If the mixture is too moist, the fruit will sink while the cake is cooking.

Has the exhibitor removed all seeds from the raisins? Most cooking raisins are sold seeded, but there are always a few stray seeds. The best cooks always go over the raisins before adding.

Other dried fruits require thorough preparation. There are always stalks to be removed from sultanas, and some dried fruits have a certain amount of dust and grit adhering to them. This may be removed by rubbing on a cloth with a little plain flour, or washing the fruit and drying by rubbing on a cloth. If fruit is washed it is better to do this the day before the cake is mixed. On no account should the fruit be left standing in water, as it will absorb some of it, and make the cake too moist. Rubbing the fruit for drying also loosens the stalks, which may then be removed.

It is as well to dry the fruit near the stove before using. The hob of a wood stove is a good place to do this.

For a finely textured cake, the butter and sugar should be creamed thoroughly.
until there is no trace of grains of sugar.

Eggs should be well beaten and added gradually to the creamed mixture. Thorough beating is necessary between each addition of egg.

Texture may be spoilt by too cool an oven, sudden opening and shutting of oven to produce an inrush of cold air, especially in the early stages of baking. The oven should not be in a draught, as this causes the temperature to fluctuate.

**FLAVOUR**

For good flavour all ingredients should be fresh and of the best quality. Perhaps the most difficult part of the whole process is knowing exactly how to select ingredients, and the amount of flavouring to use.

The following points should be useful in the selection of ingredients.

**Fat:**

First grade butter undoubtedly gives the best results. Farm butter, if used, should be freshly made. Although quite wholesome farm butter is inclined to develop a strong flavour which is sometimes evident in the cake after it has been kept for a while.

**Eggs:**

Fresh hen eggs, or eggs a few days old give the best results.

**Sugar:**

Raw or brown sugar is preferable to white sugar.

**Nuts:**

Almonds and not peanuts should be used in fruit cakes. Almonds may be left unblanched. The skins will not spoil the appearance of the cake and many cooks consider unblanched almonds give a better flavour to the cake.

Almonds and peel should be chopped finely so that flavours all blend evenly through the cake.

**Essences:**

Pure essences are stronger and give a better flavour than artificial ones.

Caution is needed to see that no one flavour of essence or spice predominates.

**Cinnamon and other spices:**

Use reliable brands.

Fruit cakes improve with keeping as it takes time for the flavours to blend.

**Brandy or Rum** added to the mixture improves the flavour and helps to preserve the cake if it is kept for any time.

Some cooks add the spirit to the mixture during the making.

Try pouring it slowly over the cake after baking when the cake has cooled. There is no loss by evaporation if this method is used.

**BAKING THE CAKE**

When putting the mixture into the tin, see that it goes well into the corners. Scoop the mixture out in the centre to make a hollow. This is to ensure a cake slightly rounded on the top when baked.

The most anxious time for the cook is when the cake goes into the oven.

If a wood stove is used the oven should be preheated to moderate heat, the cake put in at the bottom of the oven and cooked with a gradually decreasing heat.

If cooking in a gas or electric oven with a thermostat the oven is heated to 425° F. This heat is reduced to 300° F. when the cake is put into the oven and further reduced to 275° F. during the cooking. The cake is baked in the lower part of the oven.

A large cake (1 lb. of each of the main ingredients) takes from five to six hours to cook. A smaller cake (half size) takes from three to four hours. The oven should be kept free from draughts, and it is better not to look at the cake during the first hour.

When opening the oven, open and close gently and only for enough time to see into the oven.

Leave the cake to cool in the oven before taking it out.

**A GOOD RECIPE**

A good fruit cake contains about one pound of each of the main ingredients. Here is a reliable recipe for such a cake:

**Ingredients:**

- 1 lb. butter.
- 1 lb. raw sugar.
- 10 eggs (20 oz.).
- 1 lb. plain flour.
- ½ lb. self-raising flour.
- 1 lb. currants, 1 lb. sultanas, 1 lb. raisins; or 3 lb. mixed fruit.

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¼ lb. almonds (shelled).
8 oz. mixed peel.
1 teaspoon each vanilla, almond and lemon essence.
½ nutmeg grated.
1 level teaspoon cinnamon.
1 level teaspoon ground ginger.
1 level teaspoon crushed cloves.
½ wineglass brandy or rum.

Method:
1. Prepare tin.
2. Prepare fruit, chop almonds and peel.
3. Cream butter and sugar.
4. Beat eggs. Add a small quantity at a time, beating well between each addition.
5. Add fruit and essences.
6. Sift in flour and spices and mix well.
7. Two-thirds fill a cake tin, scooping a hollow in centre of the cake.
8. Put into a moderate oven with a gradually decreasing heat.
9. Bake five to six hours.
10. Test the centre of the cake with a heated skewer. When cake is cooked, the skewer comes away clean.
11. Next day pour brandy or rum slowly over the cake.

CORRECTION
In the recipe for steak and kidney pudding in the June issue of the Journal, the words "make a hole in the cloth" should read, "make a hole in the crust."
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