



by Michelle

The secret to being a good cook is to use great ingredients. The secret to being a great cook is to use your ingredients with love. MH

NANNY HOOTON'S CHRISTMAS FRUITCAKE

THE FRUIT

2 lbs red cherries
2 lbs green cherries
2 lbs seeded raisins, separated
2 lbs pitted dates
2 lbs mixed fruit
1 lb pecans
½ - 750 ml bottle inexpensive Port

THE STEPS:

- Place all ingredients in a large mixing bowl and toss well.
- Cover with a tea towel and leave to soak over night

THE CAKE BATTER

4 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon ground cloves
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 ½ cup brown sugar
2/3 cup butter
8 eggs
1 cup fancy molasses
1 cup cold tea

THE STEPS:

- Grease your pans then line them with paper [waxed or parchment] then grease the paper - set aside.
- Stir together flour, baking powder, salt, ginger, cloves and cinnamon - set aside.
- In a large mixing bowl, beat butter and brown sugar until combined.

- Beat in eggs, one at a time, until well incorporated.
- Beat in molasses and cold tea.
- Fold in flour mixture until completely blended.
- Add soaked fruit including any Port sitting in the bottom of the bowl. ***I use my hands because the batter is too heavy for a spoon to handle.***
- Pour the batter into the prepared pans, full to the top, cover and steam for 2 hours. ***If you don't have a fruitcake steamer, place a rack, brick or upside down cake pan on the bottom of a deep stock pot. Fill the stock pot with enough water to reach ¼ of the way up the fruitcake pan.***
- Preheat oven to 300°F
- Place steamed fruitcakes in preheated oven for 1 hour.
- Remove fruitcakes from oven to a cooling rack for 12 hours **[TWELVE]**
- Wrap them in cheesecloth. Sprinkle liberally with Port and seal the cakes in plastic wrap or in plastic storage bags. Once a week, brush the cakes with more Port.

THE LOVE: Make sure the bowl you're using to mix the fruit with the cake batter is big enough. You don't want it slopping all over your counter!