

# CHRISTMAS CAKES and PLUM PUDDINGS

Sugar and spice them for your own table and send them as gifts to your friends

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From *The Delineator*, December 1921

IF, ACCORDING to the old nursery rimes, little girls are made of sugar and spice and everything nice, these ingredients are even more essential in the make-up of Christmas cakes and puddings. Few gifts are simpler to make and give more satisfaction when finished, more pleasure when received, than a gay basket of fresh Christmas cakes.

The recipient of such gifts, of course, should be selected with care. The person with a French chef and a staff of servants, if such a person exists to-day, may not appreciate this type of present. But the heart of the business man or woman away from home, on whose appetite even the finest of restaurant, tea-room or grill cooking begins to pall at Christmas time, will surely be warmed by a taste of home-cooked sweets.

Two things only are necessary for success in making the little fancy cakes that rival those in the confectioner's window. These are a simple, satisfactory cake recipe, easy to make, pleasant to taste and sure to cut and handle well. The plain cake recipe given here is a standard two-egg cake recipe that may be used in layers or in cup-cakes as well if desired. In such a simple recipe the real cake flavor of sugar and eggs well blended by baking is apparent.

FOR cutting into Christmas cakes, the single recipe should be baked in a shallow pan having proportions about eight inches by twelve inches. This amount will cut into approximately a dozen individual cakes.

Round, star, diamond, square or rectangular cookie or cake cutters are usually selected for these cakes. Individual tins may be used for baking if preferred. However, the molds take much longer to fill, the tins are troublesome to wash and the cakes have a crusty edge that may or may not conform exactly to the shape desired. Unless very carefully handled, they may have an uneven surface, higher in the center or at one side. Such a surface does not decorate well.

Where the cakes are cut from a plain layer, they are of uniform depth and the edges are even and clearly defined. Should the layer of cake raise in the center more than elsewhere, cakes of uniform depth can still be secured by carefully planning the cutting. This uneven baking in the layer or loaf cake can usually be prevented by pushing the cake mixture away from the center of the pan toward the corners with a spatula or broad-bladed knife or spoon just before putting it in the oven.

Another cake that is excellent for cutting into Christmas cakes is the type of sponge-cake sometimes called a boiled-icing cake. A first glance at the recipe may lead one to think that some mistake has been made and a recipe for cake frosting given rather than one for cake. However, once tried this method of making sponge-cake will be recommended highly.

IT is well to caution the housekeeper who hasn't acquired a knack with cakes from long practise that three-fourths of the suc-cess in cake-making lies in careful mixing and beating. Directions for combining cake ingredients, followed accurately, may make surprisingly different results.

Now for the really fancy part—the icing and the decorations. Again two things are necessary: an icing that will not go wrong and a limitless imagination. The possibilities in decorating Christmas cakes are bounded only by the ingenuity of the worker and the material at hand. Cut cherries, blanched almonds, whole or cut, grated coconut, candied wintergreen leaves, cut citron or other candied fruit may be used to form any number of designs. The person who is clever with a sketch pencil can create with a toothpick and melted chocolate any design her fancy chooses.

After much struggling with twice-cooked marshmallow and other methods for making icings, all involving fuss and bother, a simple and very satisfactory icing has been evolved. This ornamental icing is very light and fluffy, has a nice gloss, handles easily and dries quickly.

Next easiest to Christmas cakes are the old favorites—plum puddings and fruits. Wrapped in oiled paper, covered with white crepe-paper and gaily tied with red ribbon, with a sprig of holly on top, their appearance may be made to conform to their high quality. The fact that they may and should be made weeks or even months in advance of the Christmas season recommends them as gifts to those thrifty souls who like to have their Christmas preparations well put of the way before the holiday season begins.

ALTHOUGH it is highly desirable to keep up the old traditions of plum pudding or fruit-cake with the Christmas dinner, modern habits of life make it wise to serve very small amounts of such a rich dessert at the end of a meal that is probably unusually rich al-ready. For this reason small puddings and cakes are in the best of taste as Christmas gifts. No longer is this rich food brought in flaming with burning brandy to crown the feast as in the olden days. More ap-propriate is a small portion eaten in the spirit of celebration of the day and with some consideration of one's digestion.



THE SAME TWO-EGG RECIPE CAN BE USED FOR BOTH THIS LAYER CAKE, WITH ITS CREAMY ICING, AND THE SMALL CAKES FOR CHRISTMAS BOXES

## PLAIN CAKE

1/3 cup butter	2 eggs
1 1/2 cups pastry flour	1/4 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup sugar	1/2 cup milk
2 teaspoons baking-powder	1/2 teaspoon vanilla

CREAM the butter and add the sugar gradually. Beat the butter and sugar well together. Add the egg-yolks and beat them into the mixture. Sift the flour with the baking-powder and the salt and add alternately with the milk. Beat well after each addition. Fold in the beaten whites of the eggs last. Bake in a shallow greased pan for about twenty minutes. The pan should be of such size that the cake when baked will be about one inch thick. When the baking is finished, turn the cake out on a clean cloth. When cool, cut in desired shapes, cover with icing and decorate in any desired manner.

## SPONGE-CAKE

1/2 cup sugar	Flavoring
1 teaspoon baking-powder	1/2 cup flour
1/4 cup water	1/4 teaspoon salt
3 eggs	

MIX the sugar and water together and boil until the sirup threads. Beat the egg-whites until stiff and pour the sirup over them. Beat the mixture until cool and add the egg-yolks beaten until light. Sift the dry ingredients together and fold them into the egg-mixture a little at a time. Turn the mixture into a cake-tin, greased and lined with paper, and bake in a slow oven for twenty minutes.



HOME-MADE PLUM PUDDING, TIED UP IN TISSUE PAPER, WITH PLENTY OF RED RIBBON, MAKES AN EXCELLENT CHRISTMAS GIFT. THE EARLIER YOU MAKE IT, THE BETTER IT WILL BE

## ORNAMENTAL ICING

1 cup sugar	Whites of 2 eggs
4 tablespoons cold water	1/2 tablespoon vanilla

PLACE all the ingredients except the vanilla in the upper section of a double boiler. Mix them well together and place over hot water. Beat with an egg-beater steadily until the icing is stiff enough to hold its shape and does not spread when lifted up with the beater. Remove from the fire, add the vanilla, and pile lightly on cakes in any fashion desired.

For coffee-flavored icing, use coffee that has been made fresh and strained through a cheese-cloth. For caramel-flavored icing add 2 teaspoons of caramel to the original recipe.

## PLUM PUDDING

2 cups flour	2 well-beaten eggs
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg	2 teaspoons baking-powder
1/2 cup sugar	1/2 cup candied citron or watermelon rind
1 cup finely chopped suet	1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 cup bread-crumbs	1 cup raisins
1 cup molasses	1/2 teaspoon cloves
1/2 teaspoon salt	1/4 cup English walnuts
1 cup milk	1/2 teaspoon allspice
1/4 teaspoon soda	

SIFT the dry ingredients, reserving one-half cup flour in which to flour the fruit and nuts before adding. Add the other ingredients in the above list. Mix well together and pour into a buttered pudding-mold, filling it not over half-full. Cover the mold tightly and steam for 2 1/2 hours. If small, one-quarter pound molds are used. Steam for one and one-quarter hour. Serve the pudding with hard sauce.



AN ATTRACTIVE CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR A FRIEND AWAY FROM HOME IS A BASKET OR BOX FILLED WITH HOME-MADE CANDIES

## HARD SAUCE

1 cup powdered sugar	1/3 cup butter
1 cup whipped cream	1/2 teaspoon vanilla

CREAM the butter and add the sugar gradually, stirring constantly until smooth. Add the flavoring and fold in the whipped cream slowly. Pile the sauce on a glass plate, sprinkle it with a little grated orange-rind and finely minced candied cher-ries and serve with the pudding.

## FRUIT CAKE

1 1/2 cups brown sugar	1/2 cup grape-juice
1 cup currant, grape or plum jelly	1 lb. currants
1 cup fat	1/2 teaspoon mace
1/2 lb. citron cut in small strips	1 lb. dates cut in small pieces
3 cups flour	1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
2 lbs. raisins	3/4 cup molasses
1 teaspoon cinnamon	1 teaspoon salt
Juice and grated rind of 1 lemon	1/4 pound almonds — blanched and shredded
1/2 teaspoon cloves	5 eggs
	1/4 teaspoon soda
	3 teaspoons baking-powder

CREAM the sugar and fat together, beat well and add alternately with the liquid. Pour into greased tins or molds lined with oiled paper and steam for two hours, then bake one hour in a very slow oven. Do not remove from the pans until cold. This mixture may be made into either large or small cakes. -If made into individual cakes, steam for same length of time and bake for three-quarters of an hour.