

ANY CAKE CAKE



Ingredients

- 110 g (4 oz) unsalted butter, at room temperature, plus extra for greasing Demerara sugar, for the tin
- 300 g (10 1/2 oz/scant 2 1/2 cups) plain (all-purpose) flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda (baking soda)
- Pinch of salt
- 125 g (4 1/2 oz/generous 1/2 cup) caster (superfine) sugar
- Juice of 1 lemon, plus the zest of 2 lemons if you want a more intense lemon flavour
- 3 medium eggs
- 220 g (7 3/4 oz) plain 5% fat yoghurt
- 2-4 tablespoons milk (if your yoghurt is thick set)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract or vanilla bean paste (optional but recommended)

Flavour variations

- 3 cardamom pods, bashed open and seeds crushed or 1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
- Zest of 2 lemons
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger or 2 balls of stem ginger, chopped, plus 1 tablespoon stem ginger syrup
- 50 g (1 3/4 oz) flaked (slivered) almonds, toasted, half stirred in with the flour and half sprinkled on top

This is essentially a cake recipe for all. It's really easy to make and can be adapted in any way you want, hopefully meaning no trips to the shop will be needed! It's a great way to use seasonal fruit, but it's also perfect for using up those bags of frozen fruit you've got hiding in the freezer or that one apple that's looking quite sad in your fruit bowl. I've developed this recipe to be fail-safe – it should always be perfectly risen and light because of the reaction between the yoghurt, lemon juice and bicarbonate of soda (baking soda).

Fruit toppings

- 200 g (7 oz) strawberries, halved or quartered
- 3-4 plums, halved and stoned
- 100 g (3 1/2 oz) fresh or frozen cherries (pitted if fresh)
- 1 cooking apple or 2 eating (dessert) apples, peeled, cored and sliced into 1 cm (1/2 inch) wedges
- 100 g (3 1/2 oz) frozen raspberries or blackberries

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C fan (400°F). Line a 23 cm (9 inch) springform round cake tin (pan) with baking parchment or grease liberally with butter and coat with Demerara sugar.
2. In a large bowl, mix together the flour, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda and salt, plus any spices you want to use (see opposite).
3. In a separate bowl, beat together the butter, sugar and lemon zest, if using, with a hand-held electric whisk or in a stand mixer using the beater attachment until light and fluffy, stopping to scrape down the sides as you go – this should take about 3-4 minutes, but it will depend on how soft your butter is.
4. Add the eggs one by one, beating between each addition, until the egg is fully incorporated and the mixture is light and creamy.
5. Now add a quarter of the flour mixture and fold it in with a spoon, followed by a quarter of the yoghurt and lemon juice, folding again. Continue alternating additions until both are used up. The key is to not overmix! The less mixing you do, the lighter the sponge will be, so just gently fold in the ingredients until there are no more patches of yoghurt or flour. If needed, loosen with a little milk until the mixture is creamy and drops easily from a spoon.
6. Scrape the mixture into the prepared tin and top with your chosen fruit topping (see above).
7. Bake in the oven for 35 minutes until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean, then remove from the oven and allow to cool for 5 minutes before removing from the tin and placing on a wire rack to cool completely.