



Baked Bean Tin Christmas Cake

Not everyone loves Christmas cake. I can't eat a whole one and so much goes to waste in our house. So, instead of making one large one, let's make lots of little ones using small baked bean tins. Then keep as much as you like and give the rest away as presents. October is a good time to bake your cake as it 'matures' nicely for Christmas. This makes 12, but do it in batches, it's less beans!

- 200g glacé cherries
- 500g mixed dried fruit
- 500g sultanas
- zest of one orange
- 200ml sherry
- 225g butter, softened
- 225g dark brown sugar
- 4 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 225g plain flour
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp mixed spice
- 50g whole almonds

1. Put the cherries and other dried fruits plus zest in a bowl and soak in sherry overnight.
2. Line a small beans tin: Lightly grease base and sides. Line sides with a double thickness of baking parchment that stands 5cm above tin. Make 1 cm cuts at base to help it lie flat. Line base also.
3. Preheat oven to 150°C. Whisk butter and sugar for 5 min till light and fluffy. Whisk in eggs slowly. When almost added, whisk in some flour to stop it curdling. Fold in flour, spices, fruit and almonds. Spoon into lined tin and make a small dip in the middle of the mixture. Wrap tin in a double thickness of brown paper (or parchment) and tie with piece of string. Cook for 60-90 minutes until a skewer comes out clean. If you want the top of the cake to brown a bit more untie the string, so the top of paper is open, for the last quarter an hour.
4. Once cooked, poke lots of holes in the top of the cake with a skewer and drizzle a teaspoon of sherry over cake. Don't overfeed it or the cake will go too soggy. Leave to cool in tin. Then remove from tin, remove paper and wrap well in a clean lot of a double layer of greaseproof paper and foil. If you want, you can feed it every week or so with sherry before decorating to keep the cake moist.

Next month we will look at marzipan and decorating the cakes.