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fabulous fruitcakes for all

Long before we choose the tree, or start our holiday party - planning, or even choose the first Christmas gift, we make fruitcakes.

They're festive, they're traditional, and they're easy. And because time can only improve them, they can and should be prepared at least several weeks in advance of eating or giving.

Three variations on the fruitcake theme are given here. One ingredient common to all is whole berry cranberry sauce — for rich flavor, tang and moistness.

Bananas are an unusual fruitcake addition — and that explains the subtle, interesting flavor of Banana Fruitcake. Also included are almonds, whole berry cranberry sauce, raisins, and glazed fruit.

Tropical Fruitcake is a spectacular dessert to serve for holiday parties. This four-layered beauty features plain and raisin layers alternated with a filling of flaked coconut and whole berry cranberry sauce. A frill of coconut on top completes the fruitcake fantasy!

CRANBERRY APPLESAUCE FRUITCAKE

½ cup (1 stick) butter or margarine
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
2 cups sifted flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
½ teaspoon nutmeg
½ teaspoon cloves
½ teaspoon allspice
¼ cup port wine or whiskey
¾ cup applesauce
¾ cup Ocean Spray whole berry cranberry sauce
1 pound raisins
1 cup diced citron
1 cup diced mixed candied fruits
2 cups chopped dates

Preheat oven to 325 degree F. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar together until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Sift together the flour, baking soda and spices. Add all but 3 tablespoons of the flour mixture to the creamed mixture, alternately with the port wine or whiskey. Stir in the applesauce and cranberry sauce.

Toss the raisins, citron, candied fruits and dates with the reserved 3 tablespoons flour. Add to cake batter; stir until blended. Spoon the batter into a well greased and floured 10 - inch spring form pan.

Bake for 2 hours or until tester inserted in center comes out clean. Cool. Remove from pan. Makes one 10 - inch cake.

BANANA FRUITCAKE

3 - ½ cups sifted flour
4 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon baking soda
2 teaspoons cinnamon
2 teaspoons ginger
½ teaspoon nutmeg
½ teaspoon allspice
1 - one third cups shortening
1 - one third cups sugar
4 eggs
1 cup mashed banana pulp
1 cup Ocean Spray whole berry cranberry sauce
1 cup raisins
1 - ½ cups chopped blanched almonds
4 cups diced glazed fruit

Preheat oven to 350 degree F. Sift together the flour, baking powder and salt into a mixing bowl. In another bowl, blend the baking soda and spices with the shortening. Add the sugar gradually while beating. Beat in the eggs, one at a time. Add flour mixture alternately with the banana pulp and cranberry sauce. Combine the raisins, almonds, and glazed fruits. Stir into the batter. Grease a 10 x 4 - inch tube pan; line with brown paper and grease paper. Pour in cake batter.

Place pan on center shelf of oven. Place a pan of hot water on the shelf below the cake. Check water from time to time and refill pan as necessary. Bake 3 - ½ to 4 hours or until tester inserted into cake comes out clean. If cake browns too much before ready, cover with foil. Cool on rack. Remove cake and brown paper. Makes one 10 - inch tube cake.

TROPICAL FRUITCAKE

CAKE

1 cup butter or margarine
2 cups sugar
4 eggs, lightly beaten
1 cup milk
3 -¼ cups sifted flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon cloves
4 cups raisins

FILLING

1 can (3 - ½ ounces) flaked coconut
1 can (16 ounces) Ocean Spray whole berry cranberry sauce
Additional flaked coconut (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease four 8 - inch round cake pans, line bottom with waxed paper, and grease again. In a bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Combine eggs and milk. Sift flour and baking powder together; add alternately with milk mixture to creamed mixture, beginning and ending with dry ingredients. Add vanilla.

Spoon half of the batter into 2 of the prepared pans. Add cinnamon, allspice and cloves to remaining batter; stir in raisins. Spoon raisin batter into remaining 2 prepared pans. Bake all 4 layers for 30 - 35 minutes or until tops spring back when touched lightly. Cool cakes on racks; remove layers from pans while still lightly warm. Remove waxed paper and cool layers thoroughly.

In a bowl, blend coconut and cranberry sauce. Spread between cooled layers (alternating plain and raisin layers) and on top of cake. Add additional coconut if desired. Makes 16 - 20 servings.