

Northern Pacific Dark Fruitcake Cupcakes

Adapted from William A. McKenzie, Dinning Car Line to the Pacific, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1990.

The original recipe produces four loaves of fruit cake, weighing in at more than three pounds apiece, and calls for the old fashioned sticky glazed fruits that are one of the reasons most of us avoid fruitcake in the first place. My adaptation relies on rehydrated dried fruit, and makes much more manageable fruit cake cupcakes. I use a mixture of dried raisins, cranberries, pineapple, ginger and cherries. You could easily make these in a more traditional loaf pan – just bake the loaf for longer and use a tester to make sure it is fully baked before it comes out of the oven.

4 pounds dried fruits – chopped into uniform raisin sized pieces.

1 cup Pernod, or other licorice-flavored liqueur, plus extra for aging

1/2 cup granulated sugar

1 cup butter

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon each, ground cinnamon, nutmeg and cardamom

1 teaspoon ground mace

6 eggs

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1 tablespoon vanilla

3 cups whole wheat flour

1/2 cup toasted walnuts

1/2 cup toasted almonds

The day before you plan to bake, mix all the chopped dried fruit in a bowl, and add the Pernod. Stir, cover and let sit for 24 hours.

Preheat the oven to 300°. Grease three muffin tins.

Using an electric mixer, cream the butter, sugar and salt. Add the spices, the eggs, lemon juice and vanilla – mixing by hand with a wooden spoon. Then add the flour – first with the spoon, and then on medium speed with the mixer. Add in the fruits (with their soaking liquid) and the nuts. Combine well.

Spoon into muffin tins (you can fill the cups all the way up) and bake for 30 min – check with a test stick to be sure the batter is completely baked. Cool and remove from pan.

You can eat them right away – frosted or not, (I use cream cheese frosting) or store the cupcakes in a few large zip lock bags in the refrigerator for 2 weeks, occasionally splashing them with Pernod, and changing the bag position.

Makes 36 cupcakes.