

SPECIAL FRUIT CAKE

It contains no butter, sugar or salt - a great way for everyone to celebrate Christmas!

- 1 kg mixed dried fruit
- 1/2 cup boiling water
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1 cup nuts
- 2 cups wholemeal flour
- 2 tablespoons gluten flour or extra flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 3 eggs
- 1/4 cup slivered almonds
- 2 tablespoons sherry

For the mixed dried fruit use any combination of the following dried fruits: dried fruit mixture, sultanas, raisins, prunes, currants, dried apricots, peaches, nectarines, dried apples, dried mango etc.

Chop or cut (with scissors) large pieces of fruit into pieces the size of sultanas. Put them in a tough, heatproof plastic bag and pour the boiling water and then the orange juice over them.

Close the bag, leaving an opening of about 2cm unsealed, lie fairly flat in the microwave and cook on High (100% power) in 1 minute bursts, until the fruit is hot. Turn the bag over after the first minute, making sure the liquid can't escape. When the fruit is hot, take the bag out of the microwave and lie it on a cold surface to cool to room temperature. Leave overnight or for at least 2 hours, to cool and soak up the liquid.

Turn the oven on to 160 ° C or 150 ° C fan-bake with the rack below the middle. Line the bottom and sides of a 20cm square cake tin with baking paper. When you are ready to mix the cake, chop the nuts finely and put them in a large container with the wholemeal flour, gluten flour (if available) and the baking powder. Mix thoroughly. In a mixing bowl large enough to hold everything, beat the eggs until thick and fluffy with a rotary beater. Add the cold fruit mixture and the dry mixture. Mix with a clean hand until everything is thoroughly combined. If about a cupful of mixture seems to be too dry to drop from your hand, add 2-3 tablespoons extra water or sherry. Put the mixture into the cake tin by hand, pushing it evenly into the corners. Level off the top with a damp hand. Sprinkle evenly with the slivered almonds.

Bake, start testing the cake after 1 1/4 hours. It usually takes about 1 1/2 hours until a skewer pushed into the centre of the cake comes out clean, showing the cake is ready.

Stand the hot, cooked cake on rack. Sprinkle or brush the surface of the cake with 2 tablespoons of sherry for extra flavour. When cold, wrap the cake in greaseproof paper and a tea towel, and store in the fridge for a least several days before cutting or freeze strips (see below) in airtight plastic bags, up to 3 months.

To cut the cake into 1cm x 4cm slices, use a sharp serrated knife. Cut the cake into five strips of equal width, then cut each of these crossways into about twenty 1cm slices.

Approx nutritional analysis per slice:

Energy 213kJ 51kcal

Fat 1g

Carbohydrate 8g