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Cut a slice of pure deliciousness from this caramel-glazed apple cake

By Susie Iventosch



Caramel-glazed apple cake Photo Susie Iventosch

We had a wonderful family reunion in Michigan this past summer, and my cousin, Cindy, brought her famous caramel-glazed apple cake to one of the gatherings. There was a bit of a buildup to this cake, and everyone was absolutely raving about it at the party. I was having such a good time chatting with long lost cousins that it took me forever to get to the dessert table, and when I finally did, there was not a slice of apple cake to be found. In fact, the cake plate had been cleared too! Disappointment set in, but since I cannot let a great recipe pass, Cindy kindly sent me the recipe for this perfect autumn dessert. Now that I've made it four times, I totally understand why everyone was raving about this cake. It is fabulously delicious.

I have two warnings about this cake, however. The first is that you might not be able to stop eating it once you start, so begin with a small slice so you can go for seconds. And, the second is to be sure to use Crisco to grease the pan, and then dust over the Crisco with flour.

The first time I made it, I used cooking spray and thought that would be just fine, but I ended up with a huge mess when I tried to turn the cake out onto a plate. It came out in crumbles and I had to piece it all back together. As you know, necessity is the mother of invention, and to make it look presentable, I caramelized apple slices to hide the holes, which turned out to be both a pretty and delicious addition to the cake. The next three times using Crisco, the cake turned out perfectly - no problem at all.

Recipe

INGREDIENTS

2 cups granulated sugar

1 1/2 cups canola oil

3 eggs

3 cups all-purpose flour

2 tsp. cinnamon

1 tsp. baking soda

1/2 tsp. nutmeg

1/2 tsp. cardamom (the recipe calls for mace, but I prefer cardamom)

1/2 tsp. salt

2 tsp. vanilla extract

3 cups diced apples, (peeled and cored) I used Fuji and Honey Crisp, but you can use any apple you like.

2 Tbsp. lemon juice

1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts

Garnish

2 medium apples, peeled, cored and thinly sliced

2 Tbsp. butter

3 Tbsp. brown sugar

Caramel Glaze

4 1/2 Tbsp. butter

4 1/2 Tbsp. brown sugar

3 Tbsp. heavy cream

3/4 tsp. vanilla

DIRECTIONS

In large bowl of electric mixer, combine sugar and oil; beat until well combined. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Sift together dry ingredients; add to egg mixture gradually, beating constantly. Add vanilla and combine thoroughly. Sprinkle apples with lemon juice and fold into batter with walnuts. The batter will be very thick. Spoon into well-greased (Crisco) and floured Bundt pan or large tube pan. Bake at 325 F for 65-75 minutes or until cake tests done. Remove from oven and cool in pan on wire rack 15 minutes. Invert onto serving plate and cool completely on wire rack. When completely cooled, glaze with Caramel Glaze (direction follows). Garnish the top of the cake with caramelized apple slices (direction follows). Wrap leftover cake tightly in plastic wrap; keeps unrefrigerated up to two weeks. Makes 16 to 20 small servings.

Caramel Glaze

In small heavy saucepan, melt butter. Add brown sugar, cream, and vanilla. Bring to a rolling boil and

boil rapidly about two minutes or until mixture thickens to coat a spoon. Cool slightly and spoon over cake so that glaze runs down the sides. Makes about 1/2 cup of glaze.

Caramelized Apple Slices

Melt butter in a large skillet. Add brown sugar and stir until dissolved. Place apple slices on top of mixture and continue to cook over medium heat, turning halfway through. The sugar will begin to caramelize the apple slices and they will turn a nice golden brown color. Carefully lift each slice and place in a fan-shaped fashion on top of the cake.

Cooking Term of the Week

Poêlé

This term comes from the French verb "poêler" (pwah lay) which refers to a cooking method whereby poultry meats are cooked in their own juices, often with aromatic vegetables like carrots and onions, in a covered pot in the oven. Sometimes the meat is basted with butter, so the method is also referred to as "butter roasting." Toward the end of the cooking, the lid is removed to give the food a nice browned color. The term can also simply refer to a sauté or frying pan.

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[back](#)

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