

Caramelized apples key to this fun fall dessert



Apple Upside Down Cake

Photos Susie Iventosch

By Susie Iventosch

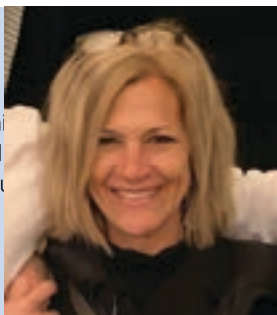
Here's a fun little autumn twist on the classic pineapple upside down cake using seasonal apples in place of the pineapple slices. The caramelized apples pair beautifully with this delicious vanilla cake for a fun fall dessert. You can use green or red apples but be sure to use apples that hold up well in baking. I've made this cake with both Granny Smith and Honeycrisp apples and really enjoyed both. If you want a little more color to the top of your cake, use red apples and leave the skins on. You can also make this cake in a round pan instead of square and that will give you different options on the apple pattern you choose for the eventual top of the cake. I arranged the apples in a quilted pattern for this square cake. You can arrange

the apples any way you like, but if you use a square pan, this pattern seems to work very well. If you choose a similarly sized round pan you can arrange them in a circular fashion like a swirl or a flower.

One key thing to know about upside down cake, is that when it is done baking, you should remove it from the oven and let the cake cool for 10 minutes (not more and not less) before inverting it. This seems to be just the right amount of time to allow the cake to flip perfectly. Then, leave the pan over the inverted cake for a few minutes to allow all of the topping to work its way out of the pan. This way you won't miss any of the delicious gooey topping.

We have also made this cake with plums and peaches in the summer and that is a great summertime version, too!

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INGREDIENTS

Apples

3 medium apples Granny Smith, Braeburn or Honeycrisp
2 oz. butter, melted (1/4 cup or 1/2 stick or 4 tbsp.)
1 cup (packed) light brown sugar
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. cardamom (use 1/4 tsp. nutmeg or allspice if you don't have cardamom)

Cake Batter

1/3 cup butter, at room temperature
1/3 cup light brown sugar
1/3 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs, separated
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 1/2 cups cake flour can use all-purpose, but cake flour makes the cake a bit fluffier
1 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. salt
1/3 cup apple juice
1/3 cup milk

DIRECTIONS

Apples:

Grease or spray an 8x8 inch baking pan. Preheat oven to 350 F.

Core apples and slice into thin (1/4 to 1/2-inch) wedges. You can peel the apples too, if you prefer, but we like the color from the red apples, so we leave the peels on. Gently toss the apples with the cinnamon and cardamom.

Mix 1 cup brown sugar with melted butter and spread evenly on the bottom of the prepared baking pan.

Arrange apple slices in whatever pattern you like on top of the brown sugar. Set aside while you make the cake.

Cake Batter:

Separate eggs into whites and yolks. Keep the yolks handy for adding to the cake batter. Place whites in a mixing bowl and, using clean, dry beaters, beat until stiff peaks form. Set aside.

Mix flour, baking powder and salt together in a small bowl. Set aside. Mix milk, apple juice and vanilla together and set aside.

Cream butter and sugars together in a large mixing bowl until light and fluffy. Add egg yolks and beat well. Add flour and liquids alternately beating well after each. Begin and end with dries. Gently fold beaten egg whites into the batter just until incorporated.

Spread batter over the apples in the prepared baking pan. Bake for 30 minutes, or until a cake tester inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean.

Remove from oven and allow to cool for 10 minutes. Then, place a cake platter or a serving plate upside down on top of the cake. Holding tightly to both the cake pan and the serving dish, invert the cake. Leave the baking pan on top of the inverted cake just until most of the good stuff drips down over the cake, about 3-5 minutes. Remove the cake pan.

Serve apple upside cake with a dollop of whipped cream or your favorite vanilla, cinnamon, caramel or praline ice cream or frozen dessert. We also love yogurt-whipped cream with this cake. Simply whip 1 cup of whipping cream and fold in 3/4 cup nonfat Greek (thick) yogurt. Flavor with a teaspoon of vanilla and one tablespoon of powdered sugar.

Note - don't wait too long to invert your cake after it comes out of the oven. We find that 10 minutes is plenty of time for the cake to cool enough to flip it. If you wait too long to invert the cake, the caramelized apple topping can get crystallized and stick to the bottom of the cake pan. This can mess with your apple pattern and makes it harder to make a beautiful cake presentation!

International film in Orinda: 'The Eight Mountains' a touching fresco of two interwoven lives



Photo provided

By Sophie Braccini

Between two boys, growing into maturity and adulthood, the long path of their intertwined destinies unfolds in "The Eight Mountains," a lyric Italian movie opening in Orinda on Sept. 15.

The title of the movie comes from a Hindu metaphor: Inside a circle that represents the world are eight mountains and seas; at the center of the circle is the highest mountain. Who is the person who sees most? The one who travels the eight mountains, or the one

that takes the time to climb to the summit of the central one? This is the existential question at the heart of the movie co-directed by Felix Van Groeningen and Charlotte Vandermeersch, adapted from the Italian best selling novel by Paolo Cognetti.

In a magnificent setting in the heart of the Italian Alps, as well as other places around the world, "The Eight Mountains" tells the story of two friends, almost brothers, and their quest for meaning and belonging. This long saga, over two hours, contrasts the very different life choices made by the two young men. One stays true to his roots, what he feels is his true nature, going up an arduous path that makes him one with the mountains he loves. The other one is the wanderer, lost sometimes, but always seeking. At the center of the friendship that was born in childhood and will almost never falter, is the figure of a

father, and what he wanted to transmit to the two boys.

Along the way, many topics are touched upon. The difficulty to make a living as a small mountain farmer, the fantasies people have about returning to nature, the commonality between people around the world that live precarious traditional lifestyles. The movie does not present the return to nature as the ideal choice to find authenticity again. It is not that simple and the choices of following in one's parents' footsteps or breaking away from it are shown in all their complexity, as well as their uncertainties as far as consequences.

Luca Marinelli as Pietro and Alessandro Borghi as Bruno have been cast perfectly. The two actors offer nuanced performances portraying the evolution of their characters, making them infinitely likeable.

The co-directors are from Belgium, but they decided to

film in Italian in the Aosta Valley (in the Italian Alps) that had inspired Paolo Cognetti when he wrote his novel. They learned Italian and moved there ahead of filming. During an interview given to Franceinfo before the 2022 Cannes Film Festival, the directors indicated that they had chosen a square visual format to be able to better portray the mountains' height. They also explained their choice of creating a very linear film to reinforce the feeling that there is no going back in life.

This beautiful and touching fresco will open at the Orinda Theatre on Sept. 15 for at least one week. "The Eight Mountains" won several international prestigious awards including the Jury's Prize at the 2022 Cannes Film Festival. It is brought to Lamorinda by the local nonprofit, the International Film Showcase. Tickets at www.orindamovies.com/

The art of birdwatching

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Roethe told a tale of walking the Orinda Country Club golf course and, seeing an empty hollow in a nearby tree, drew close to look inside. His poem begins: "Hollow tree I see up yonder, what could be its use I ponder/Might the tree be sick I wonder, or just a slight on tree's décor?"

His head in the hollow, our plucky poet was forced to leap back several feet when an enormous Mama Turkey Vulture shot out straight into his face. However, once over the shock, Roethe braved another inspection and discovered two fluffy fledglings staring back at him, photos of which appear in the book.

Stanza three concludes with the words "Mother watching patiently/Wants me gone forevermore."

Roethe spoke about his varied writing style throughout the book, revealing that in this case he was aiming to write "to the meter of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Raven.'"

He also took a stab at writing Japanese haikus, the three-line unrhymed poem with a five-seven-five syllable pattern. It's a difficult poetic form to master but Roethe obviously studied it well, ensuring that his final line concluded with the traditional "cutting word" and bestowing this unique cadence on America's national bird, the Bald Eagle.

This time, Roethe showed a video of a Bald Eagle hovering over water, its eye on a huge hake below. Seamlessly, the bird dives down, grabs the massive fish (estimated to be the same weight as the eagle) and soars back up into the sky. Apparently there's fast food ... and

then there's not-quite-fast-enough food.

There are many more fascinating birds in this book, each with its own unique story. Why, for instance, is the Common Poorwill unfairly labeled a "goatsucker"? Which well-camouflaged bird possesses the unique talent to put itself into a state of torpor for minutes or even months? And whose elongated white and orange bill has earned him the moniker "Skunkhead Coot"?

Jim Roethe's passion for his subject is evident on every page, and that passion surely ignited the same feeling in his audience: one woman asked how to get started with birdwatching. After several moments, Roethe replied "get out of the house ... get onto the trail, buy a pair of 'not too expensive but not cheap' binoculars - and just be observant."

As Seen in Lamorinda



Photo Bernard Martin

This photo of the Super Blue Moon resting on top of the Lafayette Reservoir tower, trying to hide behind a curtain of smoke, was taken at 6:41 a.m. Aug. 31 by Bernard Martin of Orinda.