Prep Time	20 minutes
Cook Time	50–60 minutes
Cooling Time	30 minutes
Total Time	~1 hour 40 minutes
Skill Level	Easy to Moderate (Intensity: Low–Moderate)
Servings	12 slices (9-inch / 23-cm round pan or 9×9-inch square pan)
Cuisine	European / American Classic
Method	Baking

Intensity Key: *Low* = simple chopping, measuring, and stirring; *Moderate* = attention needed at the mixer or oven; *High* = rapid or precision work. This cake is Low intensity for prep and Moderate for baking — the oven stage is the only part that requires watching.

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Ingredients

For the Cake

- 2 cups (250 g) all-purpose flour
- 1½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp salt
- 1½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp ground ginger (optional)
- ½ cup (115 g) unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- 1 cup (200 g) granulated sugar

- ¼ cup (50 g) light brown sugar, packed
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- 1½ tsp vanilla extract
- ¾ cup (180 ml) buttermilk, room temperature (or ¾ cup milk + 1 tbsp lemon juice, rested 5 minutes)
- 2½ cups (about 300 g) peeled and diced apples — Granny Smith, Honeycrisp, or Braeburn (about 2–3 medium apples)

For the Cinnamon-Sugar Topping

- 2 tbsp granulated sugar
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tbsp melted butter (for brushing the top)

Optional Add-Ins

- ½ cup (60 g) chopped walnuts or pecans

- ½ cup (75 g) raisins or dried cranberries
- 1 tbsp apple cider (stirred into the batter for extra depth)

Equipment

- 9-inch round or 9×9-inch square baking pan
- Parchment paper or baking spray
- Stand mixer or hand mixer with a large bowl
- Whisk and rubber spatula
- Apple peeler and knife
- Wire cooling rack
- Toothpick or cake tester

Instructions

Step 1: Preheat and Prep the Pan — *Time: 5 minutes* | *Intensity: Low*

Preheat your oven to 350°F (175°C). Grease your baking pan generously with butter or baking spray, then line the bottom with a circle of parchment paper. If using a springform pan, wrap the outside with foil to catch any drips.

Tip: Don’t skip lining the bottom — apple cakes are moist and prone to sticking.

Step 2: Whisk the Dry Ingredients — *Time: 3 minutes* | *Intensity: Low*

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, and ginger until evenly combined. Set aside. Whisking dry ingredients together first prevents clumps and ensures the leaveners are evenly distributed.

Step 3: Peel and Dice the Apples — *Time: 8 minutes* | *Intensity: Low–Moderate*

Peel, core, and dice the apples into roughly ½-inch (1.5-cm) cubes. You should have about 2½ cups. Toss them with a tablespoon of flour (from your measured amount) to keep them from sinking to the bottom of the batter.

Intensity note: This is the most hands-on step. Use a sharp peeler and work steadily — uniform dice means even distribution and consistent texture.

Step 4: Cream the Butter and Sugars — *Time: 4 minutes* | *Intensity: Low–Moderate*

In a large bowl, beat the softened butter with the granulated and brown sugars on medium

speed for 3–4 minutes, until pale, fluffy, and noticeably lightened in texture. Scrape down the bowl with a spatula halfway through.

Intensity note: Creaming is where air enters the batter — the single biggest factor in a tender crumb. Don’t rush it.

Step 5: Add the Eggs and Vanilla — *Time: 2 minutes* | *Intensity: Low*

Beat in the eggs one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Stir in the vanilla. The mixture should look smooth, glossy, and slightly thickened. If it looks curdled, add a tablespoon of your flour mixture and beat again.

Step 6: Alternate Flour and Buttermilk — *Time: 3 minutes* | *Intensity: Low*

With the mixer on low speed, add the dry ingredients in three additions, alternating with the buttermilk in two additions: flour → buttermilk → flour → buttermilk → flour. Mix each addition just until barely incorporated. Stop mixing as soon as the last flour streaks disappear — overmixing develops gluten and makes the cake tough.

Step 7: Fold in the Apples — *Time: 2 minutes* | *Intensity: Low*

Using a rubber spatula, gently fold the diced apples (and nuts or raisins, if using) into the batter. Fold just until evenly distributed — the batter will be thick and chunky.

Step 8: Bake — *Time: 50–60 minutes* | *Intensity: Moderate*

Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the top with a spatula. Bake on the center rack for 50–60 minutes, until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean or with just a few moist crumbs. Start checking at 45 minutes. If the top browns too quickly, tent it loosely with foil.

Intensity note: This is the attentive stage. Ovens vary, and apple cakes go from golden to overbaked in 5 minutes. Check at 45 minutes, then every 5 minutes after.

Step 9: Add the Cinnamon-Sugar Topping — *Time: 2 minutes* | *Intensity: Low*

While the cake bakes, stir together the 2 tablespoons of sugar and 1 teaspoon of cinnamon. As soon as the cake comes out of the oven, brush the top lightly with melted butter and sprinkle the cinnamon-sugar evenly over the surface. The residual heat will set the topping into a delicate crust.

Step 10: Cool and Serve — *Time: 30 minutes* | *Intensity: Low*

Let the cake cool in the pan for 15 minutes, then run a knife around the edge and turn it out onto a wire rack to cool completely — about 15 more minutes. Slice and serve warm, at room temperature, or with a dollop of whipped cream or vanilla ice cream.

Tips for Success

- Room-temperature ingredients (butter, eggs, buttermilk) emulsify better and give a finer crumb.
- Don’t overmix. Once the flour goes in, stir gently and stop early.
- Use firm, tart apples. Granny Smith and Honeycrisp hold their shape and balance the sweetness; soft varieties turn to applesauce.
- Toss apples in flour so they suspend evenly instead of sinking.

- Check early, check often. Every oven runs differently — trust the toothpick, not the clock.

- Storage: Keep covered at room temperature for 2 days or refrigerate for up to 5 days. It’s even better on day two.

- Freezing: Wrap individual slices and freeze for up to 3 months; thaw at room temperature.

Nutrition (per slice, based on 12 slices)

Estimates calculated without optional nuts, raisins, or serving suggestions. Values vary by brand and portion size.

Nutrient	Amount per Slice
Calories	~265 kcal
Total Fat	~10 g
Saturated Fat	~5.5 g
Carbohydrates	~41 g
Fiber	~1.5 g
Sugars	~24 g
Protein	~4 g
Sodium	~175 mg
Cholesterol	~55 mg