- Preparation Time: 30 minutes (plus overnight soaking)
- Cooking Time: 4 to 4½ hours
- Total Time: Approximately 5 hours (plus overnight soaking and optional aging)
- Difficulty: Intermediate
- Servings: 12-16 slices
- Equipment: 20cm (8-inch) round cake tin, baking parchment, brown paper for wrapping

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Ingredients

For the Fruit Mixture

- 350g currants
- 350g raisins
- 250g sultanas
- 150g glacé cherries, halved
- 100g mixed peel
- 100g dried apricots, chopped
- 150ml brandy (plus extra for feeding)
- Zest and juice of 1 orange

- Zest and juice of 1 lemon

For the Cake Batter

- 250g unsalted butter, softened
- 250g dark brown sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 250g plain flour
- 1 tsp mixed spice
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- ¼ tsp ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp salt
- 100g ground almonds
- 2 tbsp black treacle

- 50g blanched almonds, chopped

For Decorating (Optional)

- 200g marzipan
- 500g ready-to-roll fondant icing
- Festive decorations

Instructions

Step 1: Soak the Fruit (Overnight)

Time: 5 minutes active, overnight passive | Intensity: Low

In a large bowl, combine the currants, raisins, sultanas, glacé cherries, mixed peel, and chopped apricots. Pour over the brandy, then add the orange and lemon zest and juice. Stir everything together until well combined. Cover the bowl tightly with cling film and leave to soak overnight (or for at least 12 hours) at room temperature. This allows the fruits to plump up and absorb all the lovely flavors.

Step 2: Prepare the Tin

Time: 15 minutes | Intensity: Low

Preheat your oven to 140°C (120°C fan/275°F/Gas Mark 1). Grease a 20cm (8-inch) round cake tin and line the base and sides with a double layer of baking parchment. The parchment

should extend about 5cm above the rim of the tin. Wrap the outside of the tin with brown paper or newspaper and secure with string. This protects the cake from the direct heat of the oven during the long baking time.

Step 3: Cream Butter and Sugar

Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Medium

In a large mixing bowl, beat the softened butter and dark brown sugar together using an electric mixer. Beat for about 4-5 minutes until the mixture is light and fluffy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed to ensure even mixing.

Step 4: Add Eggs Gradually

Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Medium

Beat the eggs in a separate jug. Add them to the butter mixture one at a time, beating well after each addition. If the mixture starts to curdle, add a tablespoon of the measured flour to stabilize it.

Step 5: Combine Dry Ingredients

Time: 3 minutes | Intensity: Low

In a separate bowl, sift together the plain flour, mixed spice, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Stir in the ground almonds until evenly distributed.

Step 6: Fold Everything Together

Time: 5 minutes | Intensity: Medium

Gently fold the dry ingredients into the butter mixture using a large metal spoon or spatula. Add the black treacle and stir until just combined—don’t overmix. Finally, fold in the soaked

fruit mixture along with any remaining liquid, plus the chopped blanched almonds. The batter will be quite thick and stiff.

Step 7: Transfer to Tin

Time: 3 minutes | Intensity: Low

Spoon the cake batter into the prepared tin. Smooth the surface with the back of a spoon, making a slight dip in the center to help the cake bake evenly. Tap the tin gently on the counter to remove any air pockets.

Step 8: Bake Low and Slow

Time: 4 to 4½ hours | Intensity: Low (passive)

Place the cake tin on the middle shelf of the preheated oven. Bake for 4 to 4½ hours. The cake is done when a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean, and the cake feels firm to the touch. If the top starts to brown too quickly (after about 2 hours), cover it loosely with a piece of baking parchment or foil.

Step 9: Cool Completely

Time: 2-3 hours | Intensity: Low

Remove the cake from the oven and leave it to cool completely in the tin. This is important—don’t rush this step, as the cake is fragile when hot. Once completely cool, turn it out onto a wire rack and peel away the parchment.

Step 10: Feed with Brandy (Optional)

Time: 2 minutes per feeding | Intensity: Low

To keep the cake moist and enhance its flavor, pierce the top of the cake several times with a

skewer and drizzle over 2-3 tablespoons of brandy. Wrap the cake tightly in cling film and then in foil. Store in a cool, dark place. Feed the cake with brandy every 1-2 weeks for up to 3 months before Christmas. This step is optional but highly recommended for the best flavor.

Step 11: Decorate (Optional)

Time: 45-60 minutes | Intensity: Medium

About a week before Christmas, you can decorate your cake. Brush the top and sides with warm apricot jam, then roll out the marzipan and cover the cake. Leave to dry for 2-3 days, then cover with fondant icing and decorate as desired.

Tips for Success

- Don’t skip the overnight soaking—this is essential for plump, flavorful fruit
- Weigh your ingredients accurately for the best results
- Use a good quality brandy for the best flavor
- Be patient with the baking time—a slow, low bake is the secret to a moist cake
- Check doneness early—ovens vary, so start checking at the 3½ hour mark
- Allow the cake to mature for at least 2 weeks before eating for the best flavor

Nutrition Information (Per Serving)

Based on 16 servings

- Calories: 420
- Total Fat: 16g
- Saturated Fat: 7g
- Carbohydrates: 58g
- Sugar: 42g
- Fiber: 2.5g
- Protein: 5g
- Sodium: 65mg