

Prep Time	25 minutes
Soak Time (optional)	2 hours to overnight
Bake Time	55-70 minutes
Cooling Time	1 hour
Total Time	2 hours 20 minutes (up to 12 hours with soaking)
Difficulty	Easy to Moderate
Category	Dessert / Breakfast Bread / Holiday Baking

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Why You'll Love This Recipe

This Fruit Cake Loaf takes everything people love about traditional fruit cake — the deep, caramelized sweetness of dried fruit, the warmth of cinnamon and nutmeg, the satisfying crunch of nuts — and transforms it into a tender, sliceable loaf that's far less dense and intimidating than a classic holiday fruitcake. There's no neon candied fruit here, just real raisins, currants, chopped apricots, and dates soaked in orange juice and brandy (or apple cider for an alcohol-free version). The result is a beautifully moist cake with a crisp, golden crust and a soft, fragrant crumb.

It's the kind of bake that makes your kitchen smell like a holiday morning. Serve it plain, spread with butter, or glaze it with a simple orange syrup for extra shine.

Ingredients

For the Fruit Soak

- 1 cup raisins (golden or dark)
- ½ cup dried currants
- ½ cup chopped dried apricots
- ½ cup chopped pitted dates
- ½ cup dried cranberries

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup orange juice (freshly squeezed is best)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brandy, rum, or apple cider (optional but recommended)
- Zest of 1 orange

For the Batter

- $1\frac{3}{4}$ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cloves
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground ginger
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup unsalted butter, softened to room temperature
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup packed light brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole milk or buttermilk, room temperature
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chopped toasted walnuts or pecans

For the Optional Orange Glaze

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup powdered sugar
 - 2-3 tablespoons fresh orange juice
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Equipment Needed

- 9×5-inch loaf pan
 - Parchment paper
 - Stand mixer or hand mixer (or a sturdy whisk and strong arm)
 - Mixing bowls
 - Fine-mesh strainer (for draining fruit)
 - Cooling rack
 - Toothpick or cake tester
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Instructions

Step 1: Soak the Fruit (Time: 5 minutes active; 2 hours to overnight passive)

In a medium bowl, combine the raisins, currants, apricots, dates, and cranberries. Pour the orange juice and brandy (if using) over the fruit, add the orange zest, and stir well. Cover the bowl and let it sit at room temperature for at least 2 hours, or overnight in the refrigerator for

the deepest flavor.

Intensity: Low. This step is mostly hands-off — just stir and wait.

Step 2: Prepare the Pan and Preheat (Time: 5 minutes)

Position a rack in the center of your oven and preheat to 325°F (163°C). Grease your 9×5-inch loaf pan with butter, then line it with parchment paper, leaving an overhang on the long sides for easy removal. Lightly grease the parchment.

Intensity: Low.

Step 3: Drain the Fruit (Time: 5 minutes)

Pour the soaked fruit into a fine-mesh strainer set over a bowl. Reserve 2 tablespoons of the soaking liquid for later. Let the fruit drain well — excess liquid will make the loaf soggy. Pat gently with a paper towel if needed.

Intensity: Low.

Step 4: Whisk the Dry Ingredients (Time: 3 minutes)

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, ginger, and salt. Set aside.

Intensity: Low.

Step 5: Cream the Butter and Sugar (Time: 4-5 minutes)

In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment (or using a hand mixer), beat the softened butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar on medium-high speed for 3-4 minutes, until pale and fluffy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.

Intensity: Medium. You want the mixture lightened in color and texture.

Step 6: Add the Eggs (Time: 3-4 minutes)

Beat in the eggs one at a time on medium speed, mixing well after each addition. Add the vanilla extract. If the mixture looks slightly curdled, don't worry — the flour will bring it back together.

Intensity: Medium.

Step 7: Combine Wet and Dry (Time: 3 minutes)

On low speed, add the dry ingredients in three additions, alternating with the milk in two additions, beginning and ending with the flour. Mix only until just combined — overmixing will make the loaf tough.

Intensity: Low.

Step 8: Fold in Fruit and Nuts (Time: 2 minutes)

Using a spatula, gently fold in the drained fruit and the toasted nuts until evenly distributed. If the batter seems very thick, fold in the reserved 2 tablespoons of soaking liquid.

Intensity: Low.

Step 9: Bake (Time: 55-70 minutes)

Scrape the batter into the prepared loaf pan and smooth the top. Bake at 325°F (163°C) for 55-70 minutes. Begin checking at the 50-minute mark. The loaf is done when a toothpick inserted into the center comes out with just a few moist crumbs, and the internal temperature reaches 200°F (93°C).

Intensity: Low active, but requires attention. If the top browns too quickly, tent it loosely with

foil after 40 minutes.

Step 10: Cool (Time: 1 hour)

Let the loaf cool in the pan for 15 minutes, then lift it out using the parchment overhang and transfer to a wire rack. Cool completely before slicing — this is important, as the loaf is fragile when warm.

Intensity: Low.

Step 11: Optional Glaze (Time: 3 minutes)

Whisk the powdered sugar with 2 tablespoons of orange juice until smooth. Add more juice, a teaspoon at a time, until you reach a pourable consistency. Drizzle over the cooled loaf and let it set for 20 minutes.

Intensity: Low.

Time & Intensity Summary

Phase	Time	Intensity
Fruit soak	2-12 hours	Very Low
Prep & mixing	25 minutes	Medium
Baking	55-70 minutes	Low
Cooling	1 hour	None
Glazing (optional)	5 minutes	Low
Total	~2.5 hours active + soak	Easy-Moderate

Nutrition Information

Per slice, based on 12 slices, without glaze:

Nutrient	Amount
Calories	385 kcal
Total Fat	16 g
Saturated Fat	8 g
Trans Fat	0 g
Cholesterol	72 mg
Sodium	165 mg
Total Carbohydrates	56 g
Dietary Fiber	3 g
Total Sugars	34 g
Protein	5 g
Vitamin C	6 mg
Calcium	55 mg
Iron	1.8 mg
Potassium	310 mg