

## Simnel Cake for Laetare Sunday

A traditional English treat to honor Holy Mother Church and Our Lady in the midst of Lent.

### Liturgical Commentary

The Simnel Cake is a traditional part of Mothering Sunday (Laetare Sunday) observance in Catholic England. Its rich ingredients mark the brief Lenten reprieve permitted on the Fourth Sunday, when rose vestments, floral adornment, and organ music reappear in the liturgy. This joyful moment honors both Holy Mother Church and the Blessed Virgin Mary, who nourishes and intercedes for her children as we journey toward Easter.

### Symbolism

- Marzipan layer: The sweetness of divine grace and the joy of the approaching Resurrection
- Eleven marzipan balls: Represent the faithful Apostles (Judas omitted)
- Spices and fruit: The richness of Christian tradition and the sweetness of salvation

### Ingredients

#### For the cake:

- 225g (2 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 225g (1 cup) light brown sugar
- 4 large eggs
- 225g (1 3/4 cups) self-raising flour
- 2 tsp mixed spice (or cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice blend)
- 100g (3/4 cup) ground almonds
- 300g (2 cups) mixed dried fruit (raisins, currants, sultanas)
- 100g (2/3 cup) chopped glace cherries
- Zest of 1 lemon

#### For the marzipan:

- 500g (1 lb) marzipan (shop-bought or homemade)

To finish:

- 1-2 tbsp apricot jam, warmed
- 1 egg, beaten (for glazing)

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 150°C (300°F). Grease and line a deep 20cm (8-inch) round cake tin.
2. Make the cake batter: Cream butter and sugar until light. Beat in eggs one at a time. Fold in flour, spices, and ground almonds. Stir in dried fruit, cherries, and lemon zest.
3. Layer with marzipan: Spoon half the batter into the tin. Roll out a third of the marzipan into a circle the same size as the tin and place it over the batter. Spoon the remaining batter on top.
4. Bake for 2 1/2 to 2 3/4 hours until firm and golden. Cool completely in the tin.
5. Decorate: Roll out another third of the marzipan into a circle and place on top of the cooled cake, sticking it down with a little warmed apricot jam. Shape 11 small balls from the remaining marzipan and arrange around the edge.
6. Glaze: Brush marzipan with beaten egg. Place under a hot grill or use a kitchen torch to lightly brown the top and balls.

Blessing Before Serving (Optional)

Heavenly Father, we give thanks for the nourishment of Holy Mother Church and the joy of Our Lady, Mother of the Redeemer. As we share this cake, may it be a foretaste of Easter joy and a sign of our unity in Christ. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.