

## Classic Christmas Cake

For the cake

175g raisins  
350g natural glacé cherries, halved,  
rinsed dried  
500g currants  
350g sultanas  
150ml brandy or sherry, plus extra for feeding  
2 oranges, zest only  
250g butter  
250g light or dark muscovado sugar  
4 large free-range eggs, at room temperature  
1 tbsp black treacle  
75g chopped blanched almonds.  
275g plain flour  
1½ tsp mixed spice

For the covering

about 3 tbsp apricot jam, warmed and sieved.  
icing sugar  
675g marzipan

For the royal icing

3 free-range eggs, whites only  
675g icing sugar, sifted.  
3 tsp lemon juice  
1½ tsp glycerine





### For the cake

Place all the dried fruit, into a large mixing bowl, pour over the brandy, stir in the orange zest. Cover with foil and leave to soak for three days, stirring daily



Grease and line a 23cm/9in deep, round tin with a double layer of greased greaseproof paper. Preheat the oven to 140C/120C fan

Measure the butter, sugar, eggs, treacle and almonds into a very large bowl and beat well. Add the flour and ground spice and mix thoroughly. Stir in the fruit. Spoon into the prepared

cake tin and level the surface.

Bake in the centre of the preheated oven for about 4-4½ hours, or until the cake feels firm to the touch and is a rich golden brown. Check after two hours, and if the cake is a perfect colour, cover with foil. A skewer inserted into the centre of the cake should come out clean. Leave to cool in the tin.

When cool, pierce the cake at intervals with a fine skewer and feed with a little extra brandy. Wrap the cold cake in a double layer of greaseproof paper then in foil and store in a cool place for up to three months, feeding at intervals with more brandy.



**For the covering,** stand the cake upside down, flat side uppermost, on a cake board which is 5cm larger than the cake.

Brush the sides and the top of the cake with the warm apricot jam.

Liberally dust a work surface with icing sugar and then roll out the marzipan to about 5cm larger than the surface of the cake. Keep moving the marzipan as you roll, checking that it is not sticking to the work surface. Dust the work surface



with more icing sugar as necessary.

Carefully lift the marzipan over the cake using a rolling pin. Gently level and smooth the top of the paste with the rolling pin, then ease the marzipan down the sides of the cake, smoothing it at the same time. Cover the cake loosely with baking parchment and leave for a few days to dry out

before adding the royal icing.

**For the royal icing,** whisk the egg whites in a large bowl until they become frothy. Mix in the sifted icing sugar a tablespoonful at a time. You can do this with an electric whisk, keeping the speed low.

Stir in the lemon juice and glycerine and beat the icing until it is very stiff and white and stands up in peaks.

To ice the cake, place all the icing onto the top of the cake. Spread evenly over the top and sides of the cake with a palette knife. For a snow-peak effect, use a smaller palette knife to rough up the icing.

Leave the cake loosely covered overnight for the icing to harden a little, then wrap or store in an airtight container in a cool place until needed.