

SPICED PEAR & HAZELNUT FRUIT CAKE

(vegan : egg-free : dairy-free : wholemeal)

1 kg mixed dried fruit

500 ml water

1/2 cup golden syrup (or treacle, or brown rice syrup)

1/2 cup dark brown sugar

1/2 cup coconut oil

1 pear, finely diced (skin on but seeds removed)

1 tablespoon ground dried ginger

1 tablespoon cinnamon

1/2 tablespoon ground cloves

1/2 cup port (or brandy, or any fortified wine of your choice)

1 cup whole hazelnuts, skin on

4 teaspoons ground flaxseed

225 ml water

2 teaspoons bicarb soda

500 gm spelt flour (wholemeal)

3 teaspoons baking powder

1/2 cup port (or brandy, or any fortified wine of your choice)

- Preheat oven to 170 degrees C.
- Line a 22 cm cake tin with baking paper and set aside.
- In a very large saucepan, mix the dried fruit, 500 ml water, golden syrup, brown sugar, coconut oil, diced pear and spices. Bring to the boil, then turn down low and simmer for about 15-20 minutes or until slightly syrupy and the pear looks a bit soft.
- While the mixture is simmering, mix the ground flaxseed and 225 ml water in a small jug and set aside to thicken to make "flax eggs".
- Turn off the heat and allow the fruit mixture to cool slightly. (About 30 minutes.)
- Stir in bicarb soda, and be prepared for a fair bit of fizzing! (Thus the very large saucepan.)
- Stir through the flax egg mixture, which should now be gloopy.

- Mix baking powder into flour and stir gently.
- Stir hazelnuts and flour into fruit mixture, and mix well but gently until no lumps of flour remain
- Scoop into the lined tin and bake for 1 hour. Reduce oven temperature to 150 degrees C and bake for 1 more hour. Insert a skewer, and if it comes out cleanly, the cake has baked for long enough. If so, turn off the oven but leave the cake in the oven so it can cool in the tin. (If cake mixture sticks to the skewer, bake for a bit longer until it's clean.)
- When properly cold, remove the cake from the tin, and carefully pour 1/3 cup port over the top, allowing it to seep in through any small cracks.
- Either ice with marzipan, glaze with melted apricot jam, or eat just as it is. Enjoy!

