

A New Dawn for Coffee Cakes

Fruit and other wholesome ingredients combine in fresh ways

BY SUSAN G. PURDY

Photographs by Ellen Silverman

THE AROMA OF HOT, fresh cake, the crunch of baked nuts and sugar, the tang of berries and fruit—on a lazy Sunday morning, is there anything more appealing than a freshly baked coffee cake for breakfast? Simple and portable, coffee cakes are also perfect for any time that people gather over coffee (or tea), from a brainstorming session at the office to the monthly meeting of the local arts council to a weekend getaway with friends.

Compared to traditional recipes, the nutritional content of these coffee cakes has been significantly enhanced. All contain fruit: fresh fruit tops the Nectarine-Raspberry Coffee Cake, apple butter gives a deep apple richness to Apple Coffee Cake, and pears are baked in brown sugar for delectable Pear-Spice Coffee Cake. Most of the recipes call for some whole-wheat pastry flour or wheat germ, which add both fiber and nutrients without making the cakes heavy. Vegetable oil stands in for butter throughout; canola oil with its high level of monounsaturates and neutral taste is a good choice. To compensate for the loss of butter's flavor, the fruits are accented with spices and citrus zests. When nuts are included in a recipe, they are used in small amounts for a topping to give greatest "taste visibility" and texture.

To save time in the morning, measure out and mix the dry ingredients the night before. Coffee cakes also can be baked ahead and frozen. Defrost and warm in the oven or microwave, although they are best when fresh baked.

Blueberry Coffee Cake

For the best texture, do not overmix the batter or it will make the cake tough.

CAKE

- 1 large egg
- ½ cup skim milk
- ½ cup plain nonfat yogurt
- 3 Tbsp. vegetable oil, preferably canola oil
- 2 cups all-purpose white flour
- ½ cup sugar
- 4 tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1½ cups fresh blueberries, picked over, rinsed and gently patted dry, or frozen unsweetened blueberries

TOPPING

- 3 Tbsp. sugar
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped walnuts
- ¼ tsp. cinnamon

To make cake: Position rack in the center of the oven;

Coffee cakes are no longer reserved for midmorning kaffee klatsches. The homey goodness of Blueberry Coffee Cake is equally enjoyed at an early breakfast or after supper.





Pineapple-Banana Coffee Cake

The original inspiration for this recipe was a confection called *Doctor Bird Cake*, named for a hummingbird found in Jamaica. I first encountered the recipe in *Roxbury Cookery*, published in 1974 by the Roxbury, Connecticut, Volunteer Fire Department Women's Auxiliary. The large quantity of fruit in this low-fat transformation gives the cake a moist texture as well as an excellent keeping quality.

- 3/4 cup all-purpose white flour
- 3/4 cup whole-wheat pastry flour
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup toasted wheat germ
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1 large egg
- 2 large egg whites
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil, preferably canola oil
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 cup mashed ripe bananas (3 small bananas)
- 1 8-oz. can unsweetened crushed pineapple, with juice
- confectioners' sugar for dusting over cake

Position rack in center of oven; preheat to 350 degrees F. Coat the inside of an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

In a medium-sized bowl, stir together flours, sugar, wheat germ, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg. In a large bowl, whisk together egg, egg whites, oil and vanilla. Little by little, stir in the flour mixture, beating with a wooden spoon until blended. Stir in bananas and pineapple, taking care that the pieces are

well distributed.

Turn the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 45 to 55 minutes, or until the cake is springy to the touch and a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool in the pan on a rack for 10 minutes. Sift confectioners' sugar over top before cutting into squares. Serve warm.

Serves 9.

232 CALORIES PER SERVING: 5 G PROTEIN, 7 G FAT, 39 G CARBOHYDRATE; 185 MG SODIUM; 24 MG CHOLESTEROL.

Pear-Spice Coffee Cake

Remember old-fashioned upside-down cakes? In this version, fragrant pears bake under a gingerbread batter, making for a lovely presentation with a minimum of effort.

- 1 Tbsp. butter, melted
- 3 Tbsp. light brown sugar
- 3 ripe but firm pears (Bartlett or Bosc)
- 1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 1/4 cups sifted cake flour
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp. ground allspice
- 1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 large egg whites
- 1/2 cup skim-milk buttermilk
- 1/4 cup unsulfured molasses
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil, preferably canola oil

Position rack in the lower part of the oven; preheat to 375 degrees F. Coat the inside of an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

Pour butter into the prepared baking dish and tilt to coat the bottom evenly. Sprinkle brown sugar over the butter. Peel, halve and core pears. Brush with lemon juice. Cut a pear half crosswise into 1/8-inch thick slices. Keeping the slices together, slide a metal spatula underneath and invert the sliced pear half onto your hand, pressing to fan slightly. Place it, rounded side down, over the brown sugar in the baking dish. Repeat with the remaining pear halves. Bake, uncovered, for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, allspice and nutmeg into a bowl. Stir in sugar. In a large bowl, whisk together egg whites, buttermilk, molasses and oil. Add the flour mixture to the egg white mixture and stir with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula just until blended. When the pears have baked for 15 minutes, pour the batter evenly over top. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Loosen edges. Invert a serving platter on top of the baking pan and, grasping firmly with hands protected with oven mitts, quickly turn the cake and platter over. Remove the baking dish. Remove any pear slices that adhere to the pan and replace them on top of the cake. Let cool for at least 10 minutes, cut into squares and serve warm.

Serves 9.

214 CALORIES PER SERVING: 3 G PROTEIN, 5 G FAT, 42 G CARBOHYDRATE; 225 MG SODIUM; 4 MG CHOLESTEROL.

Orange-Marmalade Coffee Cake

Choose a good imported marmalade made from Seville oranges. Their bittersweet quality balances the moist, rich cake.

- 1 large egg
- 1 cup low-fat lemon or orange yogurt
- 3 Tbsp. vegetable oil, preferably canola oil

- 3 Tbsp. fresh orange juice
- 1 Tbsp. grated orange zest
- 2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 2 1/4 cups sifted cake flour
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. baking soda
- 3/4 cup orange marmalade

Position rack in center of oven; preheat to 350 degrees F. Coat the inside of an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

In a large bowl, whisk together egg, yogurt, oil, orange juice, orange zest and vanilla. In a medium-sized bowl, stir together flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and baking soda. Add the flour mixture to the egg mixture and stir with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula just until blended.

Turn the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in the pan on a rack for 10 minutes.

In a small saucepan, heat marmalade over medium heat; simmer, stirring constantly, until slightly thickened, about 6 minutes. Spoon over top of the cake, spreading evenly. Let cool slightly, cut into squares and serve warm.

Serves 9.

290 CALORIES PER SERVING: 4 G PROTEIN, 6 G FAT, 56 G CARBOHYDRATE; 277 MG SODIUM; 24 MG CHOLESTEROL.

Prune Coffee Cake

The delicious blending of dark, sweet prunes with a light touch of spices will make a prune lover out of almost anyone.

- 1 1/3 cups pitted prunes
- 1 1/4 cups sifted cake flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp. ground cloves
- 1 cup sugar plus 1 1/2 Tbsp.
- 2 large egg whites
- 3/4 cup plain nonfat yogurt
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil, preferably canola oil
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

Position rack in center of oven; preheat to 350 degrees F. Coat the inside of an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

In a food processor, combine 2/3 cup prunes and 1/3 cup hot water; process until smooth. Coarsely chop the remaining 2/3 cup prunes. Set the prune puree and chopped prunes aside.

Sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cin-

Sweet tropical fruits and island spices combine in Pineapple-Banana Coffee Cake. Whole-wheat pastry flour and wheat germ add a nutty flavor.

preheat to 400 degrees F. Coat the inside of an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together egg, milk, yogurt and oil. Set a sieve on top of the bowl and measure flour, sugar, baking powder and salt into it. Stir the dry ingredients together while sifting them into the liquid mixture. Stir the batter just to blend. Do not overbeat. Fold in blueberries. Turn the batter into the prepared pan.

To prepare topping: In a small bowl, stir together sugar, walnuts and cinnamon; sprinkle over the batter.

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the top is golden brown and a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Let cool in the pan on a rack for 10 minutes. Cut into squares and serve warm.

Serves 9.

242 CALORIES PER SERVING: 5 G PROTEIN, 6 G FAT, 42 G CARBOHYDRATE; 290 MG SODIUM; 24 MG CHOLESTEROL.

- 1 Tbsp. butter, melted
- 3 Tbsp. light brown sugar
- 3 ripe but firm pears (Bartlett or Bosc)
- 1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 1/4 cups sifted cake flour
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1/2 tsp. ground allspice
- 1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 large egg whites
- 1/2 cup skim-milk buttermilk
- 1/4 cup unsulfured molasses
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil, preferably canola oil

Position rack in the lower part of the oven; preheat to 375 degrees F. Coat the inside of an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

Pour butter into the prepared baking dish and tilt to coat the bottom evenly. Sprinkle brown sugar over the butter. Peel, halve and core pears. Brush with lemon juice. Cut a pear half crosswise into 1/8-inch thick slices. Keeping the slices together, slide a metal spatula underneath and invert the sliced pear half onto your hand, pressing to fan slightly. Place it, rounded side down, over the brown sugar in the baking dish. Repeat with the remaining pear halves. Bake, uncovered, for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, allspice and nutmeg into a bowl. Stir in sugar. In a large bowl, whisk together egg whites, buttermilk, molasses and oil. Add the flour mixture to the egg white mixture and stir with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula just until blended. When the pears have baked for 15 minutes, pour the batter evenly over top. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Loosen edges. Invert a serving platter on top of the baking pan and, grasping firmly with hands protected with oven mitts, quickly turn the cake and platter over. Remove the baking dish. Remove any pear slices that adhere to the pan and replace them on top of the cake. Let cool for at least 10 minutes, cut into squares and serve warm.

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- 3 Tbsp. vegetable oil, preferably canola oil

- 3 Tbsp. fresh orange juice
- 1 Tbsp. grated orange zest
- 2 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 2 1/4 cups sifted cake flour
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 cup orange marmalade

Position rack in center of oven; preheat to 350 degrees F. Coat the inside of an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

In a large bowl, whisk together egg, yogurt, oil, orange juice, orange zest and vanilla. In a medium-sized bowl, stir together flour, sugar, baking powder, salt and baking soda. Add the flour mixture to the egg mixture and stir with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula just until blended.

Turn the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 30 to 35 minutes, or until a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in the pan on a rack for 10 minutes.

In a small saucepan, heat marmalade over medium heat; simmer, stirring constantly, until slightly thickened, about 6 minutes. Spoon over top of the cake, spreading evenly. Let cool slightly, cut into squares and serve warm.

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- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp. ground cloves
- 1 cup sugar plus 1 1/2 Tbsp.
- 2 large egg whites
- 3/4 cup plain nonfat yogurt
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil, preferably canola oil
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

Position rack in center of oven; preheat to 350 degrees F. Coat the inside of an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick cooking spray.

In a food processor, combine 2/3 cup prunes and 1/3 cup hot water; process until smooth. Coarsely chop the remaining 2/3 cup prunes. Set the prune puree and chopped prunes aside.

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