



## Fruit Cake No. 1

This recipe is handed down from my nan, Eileen Mary Best, my mother's mother, a typist for the American Army based in Sydney during World War II who married a soldier. We don't know where Nan found this recipe, but it is written in her recipe book as Fruit Cake No.#1. Nan used to make about ten of these at Christmas to give as gifts to each of the children's teachers, to the neighbours, and one for the family too.

I remember making Nan's fruit cake on school Christmas holidays with her watchful eye on me at all times making sure that I was doing it right – lining the baking tin with baking paper and creaming the butter and sugar were very important steps. Nan has since passed away but when we cook her fruit cake, our family has wonderful memories of what it represents. It's the cake of joy and love. — Michelle Thrift, Balaclava, Victoria

- Preheat the oven to 125°C. Grease a 20 cm square or round cake tin and double-line the base and sides with brown paper (or foil butter wrappers).
- Cream the butter, sugar, spices and coffee essence together until light and fluffy. Add the beaten egg one-fifth at a time, beating well after each addition.
- Add ½ cup of the plain flour and mix through. Add the remaining plain flour, then the self-raising flour, mixing after each addition. Fold through the dried fruit and almonds. Pour into the prepared tin.
- Bake for 3 hours. If the cake looks like it is getting too coloured in the last 30 minutes of baking, reduce the oven temperature to 100°C.
- Remove from the oven and pour over the wine. Turn the oven off, return the cake to the oven and leave to completely cool.

SERVES 16

250 g unsalted butter, softened  
1 cup caster sugar  
1 teaspoon mixed spice  
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg  
1 tablespoon coffee essence  
5 eggs (60 g each), at room temperature, lightly beaten  
1½ cups plain flour, sifted  
1 heaped cup self-raising flour, sifted  
750 g mixed dried fruit  
60 g blanched almonds  
½ cup (125 ml) wine, sweet sherry or brandy