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The Afternoon Shows Traditional Christmas Cake

Ingredients:

- 500g currants
- 225g sultanas
- 125g raisins
- 125g mixed peel
- 125g cherries, washed and chopped in half
- 225g butter
- 225g soft brown sugar
- 4 eggs
- Grated rind of 1 orange and 1 lemon
- 40ml brandy
- 1 teaspoon of ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon of mixed spice
- ½ teaspoon of grated nutmeg
- 1 tablespoon treacle
- A pinch of salt

Before baking, mix all the fruit together in a large bowl with the brandy. Cover the mixture and leave for 24 hours.

When you are ready to cook, preheat the oven to 150°C. Grease an 8" round cake tin with butter, then line completely with double-thickness baking paper.

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Tear a strip from an old tea towel, so that the length is the same as the circumference of the tin, and the width is the height of the tin – if correct, this strip should fit snugly around the outside of the tin. Dampen the strip with water and fasten securely around the outside of the tin with a safety pin (this is to help the cake bake more evenly as it is in the oven for so long).

In a separate bowl, cream the butter and sugar together. Add the eggs one at a time and beat each into the mixture. Then sift the flour, spices and salt over the mixture and fold in. Add the grated orange and lemon rind and the treacle, then gently fold in the fruit until well mixed. Transfer the mixture to the tin and cover with circle of baking paper (larger than the tin– this to protect the top of the cake from burning) and bake for between 4 ½ to 5 hours (when done, a skewer will come out cleanly).

If making cupcakes, use foil cupcake cases and bake these for 50-60 mins.

Baste the cooled cake each week with more brandy (according to taste) before decorating.

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