

Fruit Picture Cake

Ingredients

1/2 cup (1/4 lb) soft butter
1/2 cup sugar
3 eggs
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup unsifted all purpose flour

Fruit topping and additional flavorings as suggested

Directions

In the small bowl of your electric mixer, cream butter with sugar until smoothly blended. Beat in eggs, one at a time, beating thoroughly after each addition. Stir in the vanilla and flour and mix well.

Butter and flour an 11-inch round shallow pan (a tart pan with removable bottom is the most desirable shape, although you can use a fixed-bottom pan). Spread the batter evenly in the pan and arrange fruit over the surface according to directions following.

Bake cake in a 375 F. oven for 40 minutes, or until cake feels firm when touched in the center. Let cake cool at least 30 minutes on a wire rack. Remove pan rim, if possible, and serve cake warm; or cool completely and serve cold. Makes 10 to 12 servings.

PLUM TOPPING. Cut 14 to 16 Italian plums (fresh prunes or purple plums, freestone plums) in halves and remove pits. Arrange halves, cut side up, over the surface of the unbaked Butter Kuchen, placing them close together. Sprinkle fruit evenly with 2 to 3 Tablespoons sugar, then bake and cool as directed. About 30 minutes before you want to serve the cake, dust the surface liberally with powdered sugar.

PEAR TOPPING: Add to the Butter Kuchen batter along with the vanilla, 1/4 teaspoon anise seed, 1/2 teaspoon anise extract, and 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel. Pour the batter into the pan as directed. Cut 3 large Bartlett pears in halves lengthwise, core and stem; then slice off the rounded back of each pear half and cut each of these pieces in half lengthwise, too. Arrange large pear slices on the cake batter, then fit the little pieces in between the large slices. Sprinkle pears with 2 tablespoons lemon juice, 1/2 teaspoon anise seed, and then 2 to 3 Tablespoons sugar. Bake as directed.

NECTARINE TOPPING: Peel 3 large nectarines, and then cut from the pits in thin slices (or pit and slice if freestone). Mix fruit with 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg; arrange the slices neatly, overlapping concentrically on the surface of the Butter Kuchen batter. Sprinkle evenly with 1 1/2 to 2 tablespoons sugar. Bake as directed for the butter Kuchen. While still warm, brush top of cake lightly with 2 tablespoons warm orange marmalade.

PEACH-ALMOND TOPPING: Whirl 3/4 cup almonds in a blender to consistency of fine powder (or grind through the fine blade of a food chopper), then blend thoroughly with 2 tablespoons soft butter, 4 tablespoons EACH all purpose flour and brown sugar, and 1/4 teaspoon almond extract until mixture is crumbly. Set aside while you prepare the cake.

Peel, halve, and pit 4 large peaches and cut each half in quarters. Arrange the fruit in rows on the Butter Kuchen batter. Sprinkle fruit evenly with 2 tablespoons sugar. Bake for 30 minutes.

Remove kuchen from oven and quickly make a border on the cake of the prepared almond mixture. Return kuchen immediately to the oven and continue to bake 10 minutes more, or until cake feels firm when lightly touched in the center.