

Sourdough Simnel Cake

Makes one cake in a 7-inch hoop or tin

12-24 hours before starting the cake, make a **Production Sourdough** and soak a **Fruit Mix**

Sourdough refreshment

Old rye starter	35
Scotland The Bread Rye Flour	70
Water (warm)	100
Total production sourdough	205

Fruit Mix to soak

Sultanas	120
Raisins	120
Dates or Apricots (chopped)	120
Water/fruit juice/rum	60
Total fruit mix	420

Final Cake Mix

Production sourdough	200
Scotland The Bread Rye flour	150
Butter	100
Egg	50
Raw cane sugar or honey	75
Grated beetroot or carrot	50
Mixed spice	4
Sea Salt (if butter not salted)	2
Soaked fruit mix from above	420
Total cake mix	1051

Marzipan

Ground almonds	110
Caster sugar (golden organic)	35
Icing sugar	40
Egg – beaten	35
Total marzipan	220

Assembly

Fruit Mix bottom	525
Marzipan middle	100
Fruit Mix top	525
Marzipan top (after baking)	120
Total	1270

Method

Soak the fruit overnight. Ferment the production sourdough overnight. Make the marzipan by mixing the dry ingredients and then adding enough egg to bind it all into a stiff paste. Work it until it is fairly smooth, put it in a polythene bag and then refrigerate it – this makes it easier to roll out.

To make the cake mix: beat the sugar/honey and egg together, add the butter or oil and beat some more. Sift the salt and spices into the flour. Fold the flour into the sugar/egg/oil mixture. Add the grated carrot or beetroot and then the production sourdough. Mix well. Finally add the soaked fruit. Mix well again.

Line a 7" cake tin with silicone paper, with the sides proud of the tin so that you can cover the mixture while it is proving (and during baking if necessary) without the cover touching the cake mix. Spoon 450 g of mixture into the tin and smooth the surface with the back of a wet spoon, making a slight dome in the middle of the cake. Using a little rye flour for dusting, roll out 100 g of marzipan until it is just less than the diameter of the cake tin/hoop. Place this disc on the slightly domed cake mix, followed by the remainder of the mix. Cover and allow to rise for several hours if possible as the sourdough works slowly but surely. Overnight may be convenient.

Bake in a cool oven (approx 270°F / 130°C) for about 2 hours, then check and continue for 15-30 minutes. Cover the top if it shows signs of burning. Test the cake by inserting a skewer: it should come out clean (i.e. with no cake batter sticking to it) if the cake is done.

When cool, brush the top of the cake with a little honey and cover it with a 120 g disc of marzipan. Mark it with a blunt knife or plastic scraper in a diamond pattern (five lines each way at a diagonal). Egg-wash the marzipan and flash under a grill or in a hot oven until the marzipan is golden brown and slightly caramelised.

[Some traditional recipes have the top decorated round the perimeter with twelve small marzipan balls, representing the Apostles. You will need to make extra marzipan for these. They should be egg-washed in situ on the patterned marzipan topping and grilled/flash-baked as indicated above.]