



Fruit and Nut Cake from Sienna

❧ *Panforte di Siena*

Serves 8 – 10

- 1¹/₄ cups whole, un-blanchd almonds
- 1¹/₂ cups whole, un-blanchd hazelnuts
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ³/₄ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¹/₄ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¹/₄ teaspoon ground coriander
- ¹/₄ teaspoon ground aniseed
- ¹/₄ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 cup, plus 2 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon unsweetened cocoa powder, plus extra for dusting
- 1¹/₄ pounds mixed dried fruit (black raisins, black mission or Calamyrna figs, candied orange peel, candied lemon peel, dried cherries and dried dates)
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- ²/₃ cup mild-flavored honey
- 1 cup sugar
- Confectioner's sugar for dusting

To Prepare

1. Preheat the oven to 325° F. Adjust the oven rack to the middle position.
2. Place a 9-inch cake ring or ring mold over a sheet of rice paper on a parchment-lined baking sheet (two sheets of rice paper can overlap, if necessary).
3. Spread the nuts across another baking sheet in separate sections and toast in the oven until lightly browned, 10 – 15 minutes. Shake the pan halfway through to allow the nuts to brown evenly. Allow the nuts to cool enough to handle safely, then gather the hazelnuts into a kitchen towel and rub them together to remove the skins. Turn the oven temperature down to 300° F.
4. In a large bowl, combine the nuts with the spices, flour and cocoa powder. Cut the fruit into 2-inch pieces and toss these with the nut mixture.

Johnny & Damian say . . .

D: *This cake is one of the classic recipes of Tuscany – and as the full name implies, it's especially famous in the beautiful Tuscan city of Siena.*

J: *Looks a little like somebody's aunt's fruitcake recipe to me, D.*

D: *Oh, but so much better. You know what they say, Johnny—that there's really only one fruitcake, and it keeps being passed around? I'm here to tell you, they bake a lot of panforte in Siena, and it all gets eaten.*

5. In a small saucepan, stir together the butter, honey and sugar. Over high heat, bring to a boil without stirring. Using a pastry brush dipped in water, brush the sides of the saucepan to remove any un-dissolved sugar granules.

6. Cook the syrup until it reaches soft-ball stage (224° F – 240° F). Remove from the heat and pour into the fruit-nut mixture. Stir to combine. The mixture will be very thick and sticky.

7. Dip your hands in water and press the mixture evenly into the ring pan or mold. Bake for 1 hour, until the top is slightly puffed. Remove from the oven and cool completely in the pan. Trim the rice paper around the edge of the mold. Unmold and dust with cocoa powder and confectioner's sugar.

To Serve

Serve at room temperature, cut in wedges.

