

Medivnyk (Ukraine)

SPICED HONEY CAKE

To serve 6 to 8

3/4 cup honey	3 egg yolks
1/2 teaspoon powdered cinnamon	2 cups flour
1/4 teaspoon powdered cloves	1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon powdered nutmeg	1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda	10 tablespoons raisins
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened	6 tablespoons dried currants
1/2 cup dark brown sugar	1/2 cup finely chopped walnuts
	3 egg whites
	3 tablespoons butter, softened

NOTE: *Medivnyk* should be made 1 or 2 days before you plan to serve it, to allow the flavor to develop properly.

In a 1- to 1 1/2-quart saucepan bring the honey to a boil over moderate heat, stirring almost constantly with a wooden spoon. Stir in the cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg and baking soda and set aside to cool to room temperature.

In a large bowl, cream the 4 tablespoons of butter and the sugar together by mashing and beating them against the sides of the bowl with a large spoon until they are light and fluffy. Then beat in the egg yolks, one at a time, and stir in the cooled, spiced honey. Combine 1 3/4 cups of the flour with the salt and baking powder and beat them into the sugar-and-egg mixture, 1/4 cup at a time. Combine the raisins, currants and walnuts in a separate mixing bowl and toss them with the remaining 1/4 cup of flour until each piece is coated. Fold into the batter.

Preheat the oven to 300°. Beat the egg whites in a large bowl with a whisk or a rotary or electric beater, until they form stiff peaks on the beater when lifted out of the bowl. With a rubber spatula, gently fold the egg whites into the batter, using an over-and-under folding motion rather than a mixing motion. With a pastry brush and 2 tablespoons of the softened butter, coat the bottom and sides of a 9-by-5-by-3-inch loaf pan. Coat both sides of a sheet of brown paper with the remaining tablespoon of butter and line the sides of the pan with it. Pour the batter into the pan and bake in the center of the oven for 1 1/2 hours, or until a toothpick or cake tester inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean. With a knife, loosen the sides of the cake from the pan and invert the cake onto a cake rack. Let the cake cool to room temperature, then cover loosely with wax paper and set aside for 1 or 2 days at room temperature before slicing.