

CANADIAN WAR CAKE

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Follow our easy, step-by-step, photo illustrated recipe to make this super simple cake. NO EGGS are used to make this war era cake, created pretty much out of necessity back in the day. Filled with pecans and raisins, then topped with a powdered sugar icing, this cake still is a hit around the table, even today. Printable recipe included.



Canadian War Cake Recipe:

I know you're wondering why a good old Southern boy would be posting a recipe called a Canadian War Cake on a website devoted to Southern Cooking. Okay, I have a fair and reasonable answer for your question.

Several weeks ago, I received a very nice Comment on my recipe for Spanish Bar Cake. The recipe originally appeared on the Our State Magazine website, as I was supplying a couple of recipes a month to their website at the time. It is also posted here on Taste of Southern, and you can view it by clicking: [Spanish Bar Cake Recipe](#).

The comment received, was from Gene M. who grew up around the Charlotte, North Carolina area, and now resides in the beautiful state of Florida.

Gene remembered the original Spanish Bar Cake, sold by the A&P Grocery store chain for many years. I had tried to reproduce the cake, and was in hopes readers could offer some input on the original cake. I was never able to find a genuine recipe for the cake, and set out on my own to recreate it. I called it a work in progress, and it still is.

Gene had tried my "clone" of the Spanish Bar Cake, and graciously said it was a good effort, but not totally accurate. For reference, I have little memory of what the actual cake tasted like, but my older

brother claimed he still remembered it. He gave me about a 6 on a scale of 10 for trying.

Gene offered that the Canadian War Cake, often made by the ladies of the Charlotte area, including his Aunt Lucy, and his mother Lorene, bore a good resemblance to the Spanish Bar Cake that was eluding me. He offered to send me a copy if I'd like to try it.

I replied that I'd love to look the recipe over, and Gene was quick to send me a copy.

After looking over the Email from Gene, I started searching for some history of the cake. I found an interesting article about it online at this link: [The Great War 1914 - 1918](#), which also features a simpler version of the War Cake as it was often called. I think you'll find it an interesting read if you have the time to take a look.

The recipe featured there, claiming to be more of the original war time version, was missing a few ingredients found in Gene's version. Neither of the recipes include EGGS, which is interesting within itself. Gene's version calls for butter, while the recipe claiming to be more of the original, calls for adding Lard. Gene's recipe includes pecans, raisins, and a powdered sugar icing, all missing from the other recipe mentioned above.

I would suspect that the ladies making the recipe after war time, added some extra ingredients to spice up the recipe. And speaking of spice, this is a form of spice cake.

Overall, I found the recipe interesting and wanted to try it as soon as possible. So, I present my efforts to you in the step-by-step below.

The cake was super easy to prepare. Most of it is prepared on the stove top in one pot, then you add flour, spread it in two nine inch pans and bake. The icing is simple as well, and adds an extra heaping of sweetness to the finished cake.

The cake smelled great while baking, and baked up quickly. It was surprisingly moist, minus the eggs, and a bit dense and heavy. It has a definite taste of a spice cake, easily defined by the four spices added to the batter, but it's not overpowering. I liked it and trust you will too should you decide to give it a try.

A very special Thank You to Gene for sharing this family recipe with Taste of Southern. I hope you'll

approve of my efforts here, and I'll look forward to reading all the comments regarding the cake, and the Spanish Bar Cake it resembles.

So, if you're ready to get busy. Let's get in the kitchen, boil up some water, and... Let's Get Cooking.



Canadian War Cake Recipe: You'll need these ingredients to make the cake. Icing ingredients are posted further down in the recipe.



Let's start by placing 2 cups of water in a medium size sauce pot. Place this over Medium-High heat on your stove top and bring the water to a boil.



Add the chopped Pecans.



Add the stick of Butter. One stick will equal 1/4 pound by the way.



Add the Ginger.



Add the Ground Cinnamon.



Add the two cups of Brown Sugar. Remember, when measuring brown sugar, always pack it tightly into the measuring cup. Thus, two cups of firmly packed brown sugar.



Add the Nutmeg.



Add the Allspice.

Have you checked your prescription on those glasses lately? If this looks a little fuzzy, it might be time to get another eye exam. (Smile) Apparently it's me that needs the exam, it looked good and clear in the camera viewfinder. Sigh.



Add the Raisins.

This will help plump them up.



Give everything a good stir, then let the mixture return to a low boil.

BOIL FOR FIVE MINUTES LONGER.



Remove the mixture from the heat and set aside.

Let the mixture completely cool before proceeding to make the batter. It's very important that the mixture be cool before proceeding. Turn the burner off and take a quick nap while you have a little time here. You can thank me later. (Smile)

This part could easily be done one day, then allowed to cool overnight and make the rest of the cake the following day. It took about two hours for the pot to completely cool. Keep that in mind as you plan to make this particular cake.



I added the Baking Soda to the 1/2 cup water called for in the recipe. I wanted to stir it and let it dissolve before adding it into the liquid mixture. I used cool water, and stirred it until the baking soda had fully dissolved.



Pour the soda and water combination into the cooled down liquid mixture. Stir well.



I transferred the liquid mixture to a larger mixing bowl to complete the batter.

Gradually add the flour, about 1/4 cup at a time, then stir it into the liquid mixture.



Stir the batter after each addition of flour, and continue doing this until all of the flour has been added.



Stir the flour into the liquid mixture, just until it's fully incorporated together. Do not over mix, and be sure to scrape down the sides of the bowl as you're mixing.



Generously grease and flour two – 9 inch cake pans.

I used the baking spray with flour to coat my pans. It pretty much depends on my mood at the time as to whether I do the old fashioned way of greasing then flouring the pans, or just use the canned stuff that is so convenient these days.

I'm not sure what influences either mood, and why I do it one way one time, then another the next. It just happens.

You can view my [Basic Cake Layers Recipe](#) to see how to do it the old fashioned way.



Divide the batter evenly between the two cake pans.

I measured this out, and found that I had just enough batter to add 3 cups of batter to each pan, along with a serving spoon size of batter to each one. Basically, I had about 3 1/4 cups of batter all total.

After adding the batter, I pick up each pan about 4 inches off the surface of my work board, then just drop it flat onto the counter. I do this a couple of times to each pan. This will help the batter to settle, spread out evenly, and reduce any bubbles that might be in your batter so you don't have big holes in your cake layers.



To SIFT, or not to SIFT, that is the question.

As a side note: I wasn't sure whether to sift the flour or not, so I went ahead and sifted it. Some recipes call for it, and others don't. The recipe I received from Gene didn't say which was preferred.

As you know, we always measure flour in LEVEL measurements. I scooped the 3 1/2 cups of flour out into a measuring cup, one cup at a time, leveled it off, then added it to my sifter. Next, I simply sifted the flour into a large mixing bowl.

Next, I spooned the sifted flour back into the measuring cup, then leveled the top using a knife. If you're not familiar with this process, check out the Basic Cake Layers recipe and you'll see what I mean.

After using 3 1/2 cups of SIFTED flour, I ended up having the amount of flour you see in the photo above left over. It was probably about a full cup measure of flour. You can see by this, how much difference the amount of flour you will actually need in your recipe will make, depending on whether you sift the flour or not. Sifting helps to add air to the flour.

Don't have a sifter? You can also use a whisk to aerate the flour. Just give it several good "whiskings" and you'll be good to go. (I just made up that word whiskings. Spell check doesn't approve. Smile)



BAKE AT 350°
25-30 MINUTES
OVENS VARY -WATCH IT CAREFULLY

Place the layers in your oven, preheated to 350F degrees. Use the middle rack in your oven.

Bake the layers from 25-30 minutes, or as needed, until the layers test done when a toothpick is inserted. Ovens will vary, so your time will probably vary. Just keep a close eye on the timer, and

follow your nose.

As a side note, my layers started smelling pretty good after about 10 minutes. I let the layers bake for 20 minutes, and then planned to rotate the pans in my oven so they would bake more evenly. I tested them by inserting a toothpick, and to my surprise, it came out very clean. I still rotated the pans and let them bake for 5 minutes longer. I might shouldn't have baked them any longer, and you'll see why in just a minute.



When the layers are done, remove them from the oven and place on wire racks to cool for 10 minutes.



After the layers have cooled for about 10 minutes, run a sharp knife around the inside edges of the pan. This will help separate the cake from the inside of the pan in case it's stuck any at all, and will make it easier to remove the cake from the pan.



Flip the layers out of the pan.

Take one of the wire racks and place it on top of the cake layer in the pan. Grab both the pan and the rack, and flip it over quickly. Place the rack side back down on the counter top and the cake should fall free from inside the pan. Tap the bottom of the cake pan while it's still covering the layer. This will also help to loosen the layer should it be stuck.

As you can see by the areas in the center of this layer, it did stick just a bit. The white looking area is just a reflection of an overhead light. This part had just a hint of a burnt taste, probably because I baked it that extra five minutes.

Let the layers completely cool on the wire racks before icing.



Canadian War Cake Icing: You'll need these ingredients, plus a little milk. The milk was still cooling

itself in the refrigerator and refused to come out for a picture at this particular moment in time. Silly milk. Go figure.



Melt the stick of butter, and place it in a large mixing bowl. A DEEP bowl would be good... just saying.



Gradually begin to stir in the box of Powdered Sugar.



I went ahead and pulled out the hand mixer, and beat the sugar and butter together until it was well mixed.



After I finished slinging clumps of frosting all over the counter, I decided to go ahead and add a little bit of milk. Start out with just a few drops and add more as needed.



Add the three Tablespoons of Cocoa Powder.



Beat the icing, adding more milk if needed, until it's creamy, smooth, and spreadable.



Place a dab of the icing on your cake plate or board, then center the layer on the plate. The dab of icing will help hold the layer in place as you build up the cake and frost it.

Spread a good layer of the icing on top of this first layer.



Place the second layer on top of the iced bottom layer. Center it up, then spread a good thick layer of icing on top of the layer.



Spread a layer of icing around the outside edges of the cake. Do your thing, and decorate it the way you like it.

I would have preferred a bit more icing than what this recipe made. I barely had enough to get a thin layer around the outside of the cake before I ran out of icing. While I had a good layer in the middle and on top, I still think a little more icing would have made it easier to make the cake look a little better. But then, I'm not very good at this cake decorating thing anyway. Smile!



Enjoy!

Thanks again Gene. I look forward to hearing your comments on the cake.