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by Liz Robb

Orange and Polenta Slices

Ingredients

For the cake:
250g butter
250g golden caster sugar
4 large eggs
100g plain flour
2 teaspoons of baking powder
100g ground almonds
140g fine ground polenta
A few drops of vanilla extract
2 large oranges
For the glaze:
2 large oranges
80g golden caster sugar

Preparation

1. 1. Preheat the oven to 160 degrees or 140 degrees fan oven. Lightly grease a square or rectangular cake tin and line with baking parchment.
2. 2. To make the cake, cut the slightly softened butter into small pieces and drop into a large bowl with the caster sugar. Beat them together until the two are well combined.
3. 3. In a separate bowl, whisk the eggs together. Add a little of the beaten egg to the butter and sugar and mix in thoroughly, repeating until all of the egg is mixed in.
4. 4. Sift the flour and baking powder into the mixture and mix in, then sprinkle in the ground almonds and the polenta and stir them in too.
5. 5. Take the zest and juice from the two large oranges and add them both to the mixture, along with a few drops of vanilla extract, and mix until everything is really well combined. Spoon the cake mixture into the prepared tin, spreading it level and making sure that it goes right to the edges. Bake for about 55 minutes, until the mixture is cooked through and the top is golden brown.
6. 6. To make the glaze, take the zest from one large orange and squeeze the juice from two. Put the juice, zest and sugar together in a small saucepan. Heat until it is beginning to bubble then simmer for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, to make a syrup. Allow it to cool down slightly, until it is gloopy and sticky but still liquid.
7. It is best to glaze the cake while it is still warm from the oven, to make sure that the syrup doesn't slip off the top. Prick the top surface of the cake lightly all over with a cocktail stick then spoon the glaze on evenly with a teaspoon, spreading each spoonful with the back of the spoon, until the cake is covered. Lift the cake out of the tin and allow to cool on a cooling rack.
8. 7. When the cake is completely cool, cut it evenly into slices or squares and store in an airtight tin.

Cooks Note

Polenta cake has an interesting and unusual texture, being both light and slightly crunchy at the same time! This is the first time I've baked with polenta, and it proved to be really popular with everyone who tried it, especially with the tang of orange and the moistness of ground almonds in the cake, and the sweet sticky orange glaze on top. It's quite a simple recipe to make, so give it a try and see what you think.