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Classic Sour Cream Cinnamon and Nut Coffee Cake

Makes One 10-inch Cake, 16 to 20 servings

When I began this book, this was one recipe that I knew I wanted to include. It was given to me by my good friend Mariette Bronstein, a superb cook and baker. The memory of my first taste of this cake in her home stayed with me for years. The brown sugar and toasted pecans form a crunchy crust that is absolutely addictive. Although many recipes for this type of cake exist, I think this one is extra special.

AT A GLANCE:

PAN: 10-inch angel food cake pan

PAN PREP: Butter generously; line with parchment and butter

OVEN TEMP: 350°F

BAKING TIME: 1 hour, 10 to 15 minutes

DIFFICULTY: Easy

INGREDIENTS:

1-1/2 cup sour cream

1 teaspoon baking soda

NUT MIXTURE:

1-1/4 cups toasted pecans

3 tablespoons granulated sugar

2 tablespoons dark brown sugar

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

BATTER:

3 cups sifted all-purpose flour, spooned in and leveled

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon salt

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, slightly firm

1-3/4 cups superfine sugar

3 large eggs

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. In a small bowl, stir together the sour cream and baking soda. Let stand at room temperature for 1 hour.

2. Position the rack in the lower third of the oven. Heat the oven to 350°F. Generously butter a 10-inch angel food cake pan, line the bottom with baking parchment, then butter the parchment. Set aside.



Classic Sour Cream Cinnamon and Nut Coffee Cake, (continued)

MAKE THE NUT MIXTURE:

3. Place the pecans, granulated and dark brown sugars, and cinnamon in the work bowl of a food processor fitted with the steel blade. Pulse 5 to 6 times, or until the nuts are medium chopped. Set aside.

MAKE THE BATTER:

4. In a large bowl, thoroughly whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt, and set aside.

5. Cut the butter into 1-inch pieces and place in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Mix on medium speed until smooth and lightened in color, about 2 minutes. Add the superfine sugar, 1 to 2 tablespoons at a time, taking 6 to 8 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating for 1 minutes after each addition, scraping down the side of the bowl as needed. Blend in the vanilla.

6. Reduce the mixer speed to low. Add the flour mixture alternately with the sour cream, dividing the flour into four parts and the sour cream into three parts, beginning and ending with the flour, mixing until just blended after each addition. Scrape down the side of the bowl again.

7. Spoon two-thirds of the batter into the prepared pan. Sprinkle one-half of the nut mixture evenly over the batter. Cover the mixture with the remaining batter, distributing it evenly over the nuts. Smooth the batter with the back of a large soup spoon or a small offset spatula, spreading it to the side of the pan first, before spreading it toward the center. (To prevent the nut mixture from being disturbed, do not pick up the spoon as the batter is spread). Sprinkle with the remaining nut mixture, pressing it gently into the batter with a clean soup spoon.

FINISH THE CAKE:

8. Bake for 1 hour and 10 to 15 minutes. The cake is done when the top is golden brown and springy to the touch, and a wooden skewer or toothpick inserted deeply in the center comes out clean.

9. Remove the cake from the oven and let stand on a cooling rack for 25 to 30 minutes. Holding the tube, lift the cake from the outer ring and place it on the cooling rack. Let stand for another 20 to 30 minutes. To remove the cake from the tube section, cut a 2-inch hole in the center of a 12-inch piece of aluminum foil and place it directly on top of the cake, cupping the foil around the side to hold the topping in place. Cover with a cooling rack, invert the cake, and carefully lift off the tube section and the parchment paper. Cover with another rack and invert again. Remove the aluminum foil and cool right side up.

STORAGE:

Store under a glass cake dome or tightly covered with plastic wrap for up to 5 days. The cake may be frozen.