**2020 Christmas Cake**

We don’t actually have ‘Christmas cakes’, but extremely rich, long lasting cakes available in the cake stand all year round. A good rich fruit cake lasts for months, or years, though the spare ones – I always make three or four at once, as they take no more time than making one – go into the fridge till the cake stand needs a new one.

The recipe has varied through the years. I went through a stage of rose scented ones for a while, marinating fragrant rose petals in rum before straining them out before I added the rum to the mix. There have been spicy ones, with a hint of cumin and chilli, and nutty ones, when we had a surplus of macadamias and almonds. But this is this year’s version.

Makes four medium size cakes or many small ones

*You’ll need:*

* 1 pk sultanas
* ½ pk currants
* 3 cups red and green glace cherries
* 6 cups chopped glace apricots (from ‘The Essential Ingredient’ online). More cherries or glace ginger or any glace fruit can be substituted. The added ginger one is glorious for ginger lovers.
* 1 cup macadamias (optional)
* 2 cups plain flour
* 250g butter
* ½ cup golden syrup
* ½ cup marmalade or cherry jam or other favourite jam
* No sugar
* 6 eggs
* 2 cups whisky
* 2 cups rum
* 1tbsp mixed spice
* 1tbsp cinnamon

*Optional:* Whole macadamias or almonds to make a pleasing pattern on the top

*Method:*

Place all but the eggs, spice and flour in a large pot.

Bring slowly to ‘hot’, stirring well, till the butter melts.

Leave to marinate overnight.

*NB: Do this at night as it will take most of the day to cook the cakes.*

*Next day:*

Beat in the eggs one by one, then the spice and flour. If it looks too moist (i.e. drips not glugs off a spoon) add more flour.

Line cake tins with baking paper, or for small cakes, thick coffee mugs. The lining doesn’t need to be neat ̶ the weight of the mix will force it into shape. Arrange nut on top if you like.

Fill each tin to about 2/3 of the tin.

Place on baking trays in the oven and turn on to 100C.

Leave for 3 hours then move the cakes around as they will cook at different rates and in different places in the oven, even if the oven is fan forced.

The cakes are ready when you can press a finger on the top and they spring back. Coffee mug ones may take three hours; large ones take 8 hours.

This long slow cooking is what gives them flavour.

Cool in the pan. Drizzle with more rum or whisky if desired. They can be iced with lemon or almond icing, but most people either leave the icing, or eat the icing and leave the cake. Serve with marzipan fruit and veg so they ca choose.

*NB*: These will be much softer and moister than say a chocolate cake, and incredibly heavy. If you want a light, cake like texture you need a recipe for sultana cake, or cherry and sultana cake, not rich fruit cake.

This cake is magnificent on bushwalks, posted to friends and relatives, or taken on emergency evacuation for sustenance and an assurance that life can be good.