

Cherry almond

SNACK CAKE WITH
“MARZIPAN” CRUMBLE

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There is so much to say about this cake, that I am not even sure where to begin. First and foremost, it is of the “snack” variety and such a variety is one of my all-time faves. A “snack cake,” for the uninitiated is – as you might expect – a cake for snacking. It consists of one layer and is, more often than not, baked in an 8x8-inch square pan (although truth be told, if it was baked in a 9-inch square pan, or even an 8 or 9 inch round one, I’d still be okay referring to it as a snack cake).

Ode to the snack cake

Snack cakes are perfect after school cakes, or teatime cakes. They are wonderful in the morning – for breakfast or brunch – or when you need a pick-me-up with a cup of coffee at around 11 am. And I’m partial to a slice in the evening when I am staying up way too late binge watching Netflix (but maybe that is just me).

Snack cakes are also hassle-free cakes: cakes that call for ingredients already in your pantry (or for those found easily at the nearest store) and that come together quickly in your kitchen. And this particular snack cake is a “one-bowl” cake – which means you only need to dirty one mixing bowl (in this case the bowl of your stand mixer) to make it.

I love one-bowl baking, almost as much as I love snack cakes, as I am a sucker for recipes with streamlined instructions that do not require that you pull out every-sized bowl and plate and ramekin when assembling. One-bowl cakes are always easy to make and when you turn back to your kitchen sink, after placing said cake in the oven, there is just one dirty bowl waiting for you.

Favorite flavor combo

Finally, this particular snack cake showcases one of my favorite flavor combos: cherry and almond. It has the most tender and moist of almond-flavored crumbs and is studded throughout with bright red cherries – making it as pretty as it is tasty. Moreover, the crumb topping is sweet, crunchy and buttery and very marzipan-like in flavor, due to the addition of almond paste. The cake keeps on the counter for several days, if wrapped tightly. It is delicious with a scoop of vanilla ice cream, or a dollop of lightly sweetened whipped cream, but honestly it needs no accompaniment: it’s that good. And, yet, if the combination of cherries and almond is not your thing, you could easily sub blueberries for the cherries, or even blackberries or raspberries – all would be delish, I promise.

Ingredients for the cake:

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup cake flour
1/2 tsp table salt
2 tsp baking powder
1/2 cup light brown sugar
1/4 cup granulated sugar
4 tbsp unsalted butter, cubed, room temp
2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 yolk
2 tsp pure vanilla extract
1 tsp almond extract
1/2 cup buttermilk, room temp
1 1/2 – 2 cups cherries, fresh or frozen (do not defrost cherries first, if using frozen)



“Marzipan” crumble

1/2 cup all-purpose flour
4 oz almond paste, cut into small cubes
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup unsalted butter, chilled, and cubed

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 350-degrees. Grease an 8x8x2-inch pan with cooking spray, or softened butter. Line with parchment, and set aside.

To make the cake

Combine the flours, salt, baking powder and two sugars in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment and mix on low to combine.

Add the butter and oil and mix on low until the butter is in pea-sized pieces. Then add the egg and yolk, mixing after each, and then the extracts and buttermilk. Increase the speed to medium and mix until a smooth thick batter forms, about 30 seconds.

Remove the bowl and fold in the cherries with a rubber spatula. Transfer the dough to the prepared pan and smooth the top.

To make the marzipan crumble

In the now empty stand mixer bowl (no need to clean it) combine the flour, almond paste, and granulated sugar with your fingers until coarse crumbs form.

Add the butter to the bowl, and continue to combine with your fingers until a small bit of dough stays together when you squeeze it together with your fingers. Sprinkle the crumbs over the cake and place in the preheated oven. Bake for 38-43 minutes, rotating the cake after 20. Begin checking it at 35 minutes. It is ready when a toothpick comes out with only a moist crumb or two.

Let the cake come to room temp before slicing it and serving. The cake is very moist and will last on the counter for a few days, tightly wrapped. The slices also freeze well and can be reheated in a 350-degree oven, wrapped in foil. •

Jessie is a baker and cookbook author; you can learn more about her through her website jessiesheehanbakes.com.