

I often do small acts to remind people that they are loved. When I was first diagnosed, with my CF, at the age of 8, I walked through life worried about all my troubles and worries. Once I began reflecting on the burdens that others carried, I realized and became grateful for just how much I did have.

When I graduated from my undergraduate program in 2016 and returned to Chicago, I wanted to learn how to bake. With each self-training session, I made increasing amounts of “extras” for passing out. I was so happy to see the surprised and delighted faces when I shared the creations with my neighbors, nurses, doctors, family, friends, classmates, and even the mailman.

Those practice baking sessions soon morphed into monthly endeavors to make progressively complex gifts. I realized that I could extract tremendous worth from the simplest ingredients with diligence, effort, and love. I turned baking into my outlet for creativity and for giving back.

Going out of my way to care for others by sharing my baked goods has helped shape the perspective I bring to my practice of medicine. Going out of my way to care for others, I realized that while each person is but a small piece in the grand puzzle of humanity, each tiny piece is singular and necessary to understand life’s larger picture.

While I am not gifted in the traditional definition of creativity, baking is my way of expressing the creativity I do possess. Of all goods I have baked, the most loved recipe is my almond cake. I adapted the recipe from one I found in the New York Times. My secret, though, is that I make fresh almond paste based on my grandmother’s recipe. Almond paste is often riddled with preservatives and tastes like chemicals, so I hold firmly that my grandmother’s paste recipe is what truly makes this cake shine.

Almond Paste AND Almond Cake

★★★★★

Heather Tried and True

Servings Yield: 200 g paste and 1 cake

Ingredients

 [Scale & Convert](#)

Paste Ingredients:

Ingredient 1:

99 g blanched almond flour

Ingredient 2:

100.15 g confectioners sugar

Ingredient 3:

3.53 g almond extract

Ingredient 4:

2.65 g rose water extract

Ingredient 5:

20.6 g egg whites

Cake Ingredients:

225 g (1 cup) sour cream

6 g (1 tsp) baking soda

220 g (2 cups, measured after sifting) **sifted** all-purpose flour

1.6 g (1/2 tsp) salt

225 g (2 sticks) butter, softened

300 g (1 1/2 cups) granulated sugar

200 g (7-ounce tube) almond paste

56 g egg yolks (ie yolks of 4 eggs), room temperature

3 g (1 tsp) almond extract

Description

The almond paste recipe included here makes exactly enough for one cake ie 200 g.

Directions

Almond Paste Directions:

Pulse 1 and 2 in cuisinart food processor. Break up any lumps.

Add 3 and 4 to bowl of processor. Pulse to combine.

Add 5 to bowl. Process ingredients until they come together in a firm mass/ball.

Turn out dough onto your work surface and knead a few times. FYI it will be a bit sticky.

Wrap in plastic wrap AND then put into an airtight container.

Cake Directions

Heat the oven to 350°F (175°C), with a rack in the center. Butter a 9-inch (23cm) springform pan.

Line the bottom with parchment paper and butter the parchment.

Stir together the sour cream and baking soda in a small bowl (but not too small of a bowl, because the baking soda reacts with the acid in the sour cream, so it will start to puff up).

Whisk together the flour and salt in a medium bowl.

In a food processor, cream the butter and sugar together until pale and fluffy, [3 to 5 minutes](#).

Crumble the almond paste into small pieces and add a few pieces at a time through the top, pulsing until the mixture is very smooth.

Add the egg yolks, one at a time, pulsing until incorporated after each addition.

Add the sour cream mixture and almond extract and pulse to combine.

With a rubber spatula, scrape the batter into a large bowl.

Fold in the flour mixture just until the batter is smooth and no streaks of flour remain.

Scrape the batter into the pan and smooth the top.

ONLY IF YOUR SPRINGFORM PAN LEAKS, Set the pan a on a rimmed baking sheet. IF SPRINGFORM is FUNCTIONAL, put it straight into oven.

Bake until the cake shrinks from sides of the pan and the top is golden and springs back when lightly pressed, [50 to 60 minutes](#).

Watch bake time carefully. In a perfectly calibrated convection bake oven, this cake bakes up in [47.5 minutes](#) during springtime (4/20/19) and [52 minutes](#) in the winter (12/19/20).

Let the cake cool completely in the pan on a rack.

Store airtight, in or out of the refrigerator. The cake improves with age and can be made up to 2 weeks ahead.

A few pictures of the Almond Cakes I have made over the years:

