

Chocolate Cherry Fruitcake

Makes 2 loaf-sized cakes

Adapted from Ready for Dessert by David Lebovitz

1 1/2 cups dried cherries, well-chopped

1/4 cup plus 6 tablespoons rum, whiskey, or amaretto

1 1/4 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder (Dutch-process or natural)

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

10 tablespoons butter (salted or unsalted), at room temperature

2 cups sugar

2 large eggs, at room temperature

1 egg yolk

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2/3 cup buttermilk or plain yogurt (regular or low-fat)

1 cup walnuts, pecans, or almonds, toasted and finely-chopped

3/4 cup chocolate chips

A day or so before you make the cake, toss the cherries in 1/4 cup of liquor. Cover, and let macerate. To bake the cakes, grease two 9-inch loaf pans and line the bottoms with parchment paper or dust with cocoa powder. Preheat the oven to 350F. Sift together the flour, cocoa, salt, baking soda, and baking powder. Set aside. In the bowl of a standing electric mixer, or by hand, beat the butter and sugar until very light and fluffy. Stir together the eggs and yolk with the vanilla, then dribble them in while beating. Mix in one-third of the flour/cocoa mixture, then half of the yogurt or buttermilk. Then mix in another third of the dry ingredients, then the rest of the yogurt. Finally add the remaining dry ingredients, and gently stir in the nuts, chocolate chips and cherries. (Which should have absorbed all the liquid. If not, add that as well.) Divide and smooth the batter into the two prepared loaf pans and bake for 45 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Let stand on the counter top for about 15 minutes. With a skewer, poke 50 holes in the cake and spoon 3 tablespoons of liquor over each cake. Let cool. These cakes will last, well-wrapped, for about a week. If you want a really boozy cake, you can brush with additional liquor every few days before serving. They can also be frozen, although if you choose that route, don't add liquor to them. You can rewarm them once they're thawed and add it later.