Ultimate Carrot Cake

Ingredients

Candied Carrot Peels ~

- Peels from 2 pounds organic carrots washed, making sure you get a nice thick peel, if they are too thin, they will fall apart while you candy them.
- 200g (1 cup) sugar
- 240ml (1 cup) water
- 1 tablespoon orange blossom water or ½ teaspoon orange extract
- Pinch kosher salt

Cake ~

- 450g (4 cups) loosely packed finely grated carrots
- 280g (2⅓ cups) all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 250g (1¼ cups) granulated sugar
- 200g (1 cup) lightly packed brown sugar
- 300ml (1¼ cups) mild-flavored oil such as vegetable oil
- 4 eggs at room temperature
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- Finely grated zest of ½ large orange
- 150g (1¾ cups) sweetened shredded coconut plus 150g (1¾ cups) additional for decorating the outside (if desired)
- 160g (1 cup) chopped dried fruit such as apricots, raisins, cherries

Cream Cheese Frosting ~

- 680g *(*1½ lb) cream cheese, at room temperature
- 330g (1½ cups) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ teaspoon lemon extract, optional
- 2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 600g (5 cups) powdered sugar
- 30ml (2 tablespoons) Lyle's Golden Syrup (CSR brand if you can find it)

Preparation

Candied Carrot Peels ~

1. Preheat the oven to 200°F / 95°C. Line a baking sheet with a silicone baking mat.

2. In a saucepan over medium-low heat, stir together the simple syrup, orange blossom water, and salt and warm to a gentle simmer. Add the carrot peels and cook just until the peels are turning translucent.
3. Strain the peels in a fine-mesh sieve and then lay them out on the prepared baking sheet.
4. Bake until the carrot peels start to curl up, anywhere from 30-60 minutes, depending on their thickness.
5. Turn the oven temperature to 100°F / 40°C and bake until completely dry; this can take several hours.
6. Transfer to an airtight container and store in a cool, dry place for up to 48 hours.

Cake ~

1. Preheat oven to 175°C (350°F).
2. Generously grease two 20 x 7.5cm (8x3-inch) cake pans, then line them with greased parchment paper.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and nutmeg until well combined.
4. In a separate bowl, whisk together both sugars, oil, eggs, vanilla, orange zest, 150g (1¾ cups) of the coconut, dried fruit, and carrots.
5. Add the dry ingredients and mix just until uniformly combined.
6. Divide the batter into the two prepared pans and spread evenly using an offset spatula.
7. Gently tap the pans on the counter several times to release excess air bubbles.
8. Bake until a cake tester comes out clean, 50 to 55 minutes.
9. Let cakes cool completely before removing from the pans.
10. Remove the parchment paper and place one cake layer on a serving plate.

Cream Cheese Frosting ~

1. In a large bowl blend the cream cheese, butter, vanilla, lemon extract, lemon juice, confectioners' sugar and Lyle's Golden Syrup, until smooth.
2. Put one of the layers of cake on a 8-Inch Cake Circle and then top it with 1 cup of the cream cheese icing.
3. Cover the cake with a thin crumb coat.
4. Finish with a smooth coating of the cream cheese icing.
5. If using, arrange candied carrot peels around the cake or press additional shredded coconut to the sides of the cake.