

Colonial American Election Cake

🕒 Prep 30 min + rise time

🕒 Cook 45–55 min

🍽 Serves 12



Thirty quarts flour, ten pounds butter, fourteen pounds sugar, twelve pounds raisins, three dozen eggs, one pint wine, one quart brandy, four ounces cinnamon, four ounces fine colander seed, three ounces ground alspice; wet the flour with the milk to the consistency of bread over night, adding one quart yeast, the next morning work the butter and sugar together for half an hour, which will render the cake much lighter and whiter; when it has risen light, work in every other ingredient except the plumbs, which work in when going in-



Ingredients

- 1 cup warm milk
- 2 1/4 tsp active dry yeast
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp fine salt
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp ground cloves
- 1 cup raisins or dried currants
- 1 cup chopped nuts (walnuts or pecans)
- 1/2 cup dried fruit (optional: apricots, cherries, figs)

Instructions

- 1 Activate yeast**
Warm the milk to about 110°F. Stir in the yeast and let it sit 5–10 minutes until foamy.
- 2 Cream butter & sugar**
In a large bowl, cream the softened butter and brown sugar until light and fluffy.
- 3 Add eggs**
Beat in the eggs one at a time, then add the vanilla.
- 4 Combine dry ingredients**
In a separate bowl, whisk together flour, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves.
- 5 Mix dough**
Add the yeast mixture to the butter mixture. Gradually add the dry ingredients, mixing until a soft dough forms.
- 6 Fold in fruit & nuts**
Stir in raisins, nuts, and any additional dried fruit.
- 7 First rise**
Cover the bowl and let the dough rise in a warm place for 1–1.5 hours, until doubled.
- 8 Prepare pan**
Grease a large bundt pan or two loaf pans.
- 9 Second rise**
Transfer dough to the pan(s), cover lightly, and let rise another 30–45 minutes.
- 10 Bake**
Bake at 375°F for 45–55 minutes, until golden brown and a skewer comes out clean.
- 11 Cool & serve**
Cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a rack. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Election Cake: A Brief History

A Traditional American Civic Food

Election Cake is one of the earliest uniquely American baked goods. Emerging in colonial New England, it was prepared for large public gatherings on Election Day and other civic occasions. These cakes were substantial, fruit-filled, yeast-leavened creations meant to feed entire communities.

Origins in Colonial Connecticut

Election Cake traces back to Connecticut in the mid-1700s. Towns held annual Election Day events to choose local officials, often accompanied by worship services, sermons, militia drills, and shared meals. Women baked enormous cakes—sometimes weighing 20 to 30 pounds—to feed voters and travelers.

The first printed recipe appeared in *American Cookery* (1796) by Amelia Simmons, the first cookbook written by an American author.

Why It Was Called "Election Cake"

Election Cake symbolized:

- Community unity
- Civic responsibility
- Hospitality and service
- Public virtue and moral character

Early Americans viewed voting as a moral duty. Election Day was treated with seriousness and celebration, often beginning with Scripture reading and exhortations from pastors. The cake became part of the shared meal that followed.

A Reflection of Early American Values

Election Cake embodies themes central to early American life:

- **Ordered Liberty:** Freedom paired with virtue and responsibility.
- **Community Life:** Families and churches working together.
- **Christian Influence:** Elections often included sermons on justice and righteousness.
- **Hospitality:** Women prepared the cake as an act of service to their communities.

Decline and Modern Revival

Election Cake faded in the late 1800s as civic life changed and industrialization reshaped food traditions. Today, it is experiencing a revival among historians, traditional bakers, and homeschool families seeking to reconnect with America's heritage.

Why Bake Election Cake Today?

Baking Election Cake during Constitution Week or Election Day helps families:

- Teach American history
- Celebrate civic duty
- Practice hospitality
- Connect children to early American Christian-influenced traditions



Election Cake Recipe: A Historic American Cake - 31 Daily

www.31daily.com



Ginger cake colonial recipe – Artofit

www.artofit.org



Kitchen Interior in the 18th Century

www.meisterdrucke.us

Election cake.

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