

Sephardi orange and almond cake

This recipe is adapted from Claudia Roden. This cake has north African and Spanish roots. According to Claudia, citrus cultivation and trade was particularly associated with Sephardi Jews around the Mediterranean, and there are any number of orange cake recipes in Sephardi culture. You could use five or so clementines or tangerines instead of the oranges. This cake is remarkable for its total lack of both butter and flour.

Serves: 12

2 large unwaxed oranges

a dash of olive oil for greasing the tin

6 eggs

250g white sugar

2 tbsps orange blossom water

1 tsp baking powder

pinch of salt

250g blanched almonds, coarsely ground

1. Boil the oranges in water for a couple of hours or until the rind is soft – the tines of a fork should slip in easily. Keep topping up the pan with water if needed.
2. Meanwhile, heat the oven (on the conventional setting, ie with no fan) to 180C with a rack just below the middle. Line and grease a 9" cake tin and set aside.
3. When the oranges are done lift them out and cut them in half to remove any pips. Then blitz them – rind, pulp and all – in a processor to a puree.
4. In another bowl whisk the eggs and sugar together until light, creamy and three times their original volume. You should be able to dribble a line of batter off the end of the whisk into a complete figure of eight before it sinks into the mix.
5. Mix in the orange blossom water, baking powder, salt and ground almonds. Then mix in the orange puree.
6. Pour the batter into the prepared cake tin and bake for around 50 minutes or until evenly browned on top and cooked through. Rotate the cake half way through baking if it is not browning evenly on top.
7. Let the cake cool in the tin before carefully turning it out. This deliciously moist and fragrant cake will keep well in the fridge, wrapped, for several days.