

gingerbread cake

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Gingerbread Cake

A dark, wet, heavily spiced molasses cake, served in a square from the tin with whipped cream or lemon sauce. Gingerbread as a cake — rather than a hard, moulded biscuit — is the American and English farmhouse form, and it is one of the oldest continuously baked sweet things in both countries, older than chemical leavening, older than the domestic oven.

What makes it work

- **Molasses is the flavour, the colour and the acid.** It reacts with baking soda for the lift, and its bitterness is what stops the cake being merely sweet. Blackstrap is too bitter; use dark or full-flavour. See [Molasses](#).
- **Three gingers if you can.** Ground for the base heat, fresh grated for the bright top note, stem or crystallised for the bite. See [ginger](#).
- **Hot liquid poured in last.** Boiling water or coffee added at the end thins the batter dramatically and gives the wet, dense, almost pudding-like crumb.
- **Bake it in a square tin and do not turn it out.** This is a cut-and-serve cake.
- **It genuinely improves for three days.** Spice cakes need time for the volatile compounds to distribute; day one is the worst day to eat it.

Ingredients

One 23 cm square tin. Serves 12.

- 240 ml [molasses](#) or black treacle
- 120 ml boiling water or hot [coffee](#)
- 115 g unsalted butter, melted
- 200 g dark brown sugar
- 2 [eggs](#)
- 280 g all-purpose flour
- 8 g baking soda
- 5 g fine salt
- 15 g ground [ginger](#)
- 8 g ground [cinnamon](#)
- 2 g ground cloves
- 2 g [nutmeg](#)
- 1 g ground black pepper
- 30 g fresh ginger, grated
- 80 g stem ginger, chopped, optional

Method

Heat the oven to **175 °C / 350 °F**. Butter and line the tin.

Whisk the molasses, melted butter and brown sugar, then the eggs, then the fresh and stem ginger.

Sift in the flour, soda, salt and ground spices and whisk to a thick batter.

Pour in the boiling water and whisk — it will go very thin and glossy. Get it into the tin quickly, because the soda has already started.

Bake **35–40 minutes**, until the centre springs back. It should look almost black.

Cool in the tin. Serve with whipped cream, lemon sauce, or a lemon glaze.

Notes

- **Lemon is the traditional partner** and the right one — the acid cuts the molasses. A glaze of 150 g powdered sugar and the juice of one [lemon](#) is enough.
- Pears, apples or pumpkin fold in well; see [pears](#), [apple](#) and [Pumpkins](#).
- **Keeps a week** wrapped, improving until about day four, and freezes for three months.
- The biscuit form is on [cookies](#) as gingerbread cut-outs, and the rye version is [spiced rye ginger cookies](#).

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