

honey cake

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Honey Cake

Two very different cakes share the name. *Lekach* is the Ashkenazi Rosh Hashanah loaf — dark, spiced, oil-based, made with honey, coffee and often whisky, eaten for a sweet new year. *Medovik* is the Russian layer cake: eight or nine paper-thin honey biscuit layers stacked with sour cream, left overnight until the layers soften into cake. Both are here, because the ingredient behaves the same way in each.

What makes it work

- **Honey is hygroscopic and acidic.** It holds water, so a honey cake stays moist for a week, and its acidity reacts with baking soda for lift. See [Honey](#).
- **It also browns fast.** Fructose caramelises at a lower temperature than sucrose, so a honey cake bakes at 160–170 °C rather than 180, and the tin gets lined and sometimes tented with foil.
- **Warm the honey to pour it.** Cold honey will not disperse into a batter.
- **For medovik, the dough is cooked over a bain-marie**, which is unusual and necessary — honey, butter, sugar and soda heated together foam up and turn pale, and that foam is the biscuit's texture.
- **Medovik must rest overnight.** The layers go in crisp and come out as cake. Cut sooner and it shatters.

Ingredients

Lekach — one 23 × 13 cm loaf, or a 23 cm square

- 350 g [honey](#), warmed
- 200 g granulated sugar
- 180 ml neutral oil
- 3 [eggs](#)
- 240 ml strong warm [coffee](#) or black tea
- 60 ml whisky or orange juice
- 400 g all-purpose flour
- 8 g baking powder
- 5 g baking soda
- 5 g fine salt
- 8 g ground [cinnamon](#)
- 3 g ground cloves, 3 g [nutmeg](#), 3 g ground [ginger](#)
- 100 g flaked [almonds](#), to top

Medovik — one 20 cm cake, 8 layers

Layers: 150 g [honey](#) · 100 g unsalted butter · 150 g sugar · 2 [eggs](#) · 8 g baking soda · 500 g all-purpose flour · 3 g salt

Cream: 800 g full-fat sour cream · 200 g powdered sugar · 1 tsp vanilla

Method

Lekach. Heat the oven to **165 °C / 325 °F** and line the tin. Whisk the honey, sugar and oil, then the eggs, then the coffee and whisky. Sift in the dry ingredients and whisk smooth — the batter is thin. Scatter almonds over. Bake **50–60 minutes**, tenting with foil at 35 minutes. Cool in the tin.

Medovik. Melt the honey, butter and sugar over a bain-marie. Whisk in the soda; the mixture will foam and pale. Whisk in the eggs off the heat, then work in the flour and salt to a soft dough. Divide into eight, chill 30 minutes, and roll each piece between parchment to a 22 cm circle. Bake each **175 °C / 350 °F for 4–5 minutes** until golden, and trim to 20 cm while warm, saving the scraps.

Whip the sour cream with the powdered sugar and vanilla. Stack the layers with cream between, coat the outside, and press the crushed scraps over the whole cake. Refrigerate **overnight**.

Notes

- **Lekach keeps a week** and is traditionally baked days ahead — it is better on day three.
- **Medovik must be made a day ahead.** There is no shortcut; the softening is the recipe.
- Buckwheat honey gives lekach a much darker, more molasses-like flavour; see [Buckwheat](#).

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