

plum torte

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Plum Torte

A thin butter cake with halved Italian prune plums pressed into the top, cut side up, which sink as it bakes and turn to jam. Marian Burros published it in the *New York Times* every September from 1983 to 1989, and then the paper printed it again as a farewell in 1995 after readers complained about its absence. It is the most-requested recipe in that paper's history.

It is here as the model for a whole category: the plain batter that exists to carry seasonal fruit.

What makes it work

- **A very small amount of batter.** 150 g of flour for a 23 cm tin. The fruit is the cake; the batter is a raft.
- **Italian prune plums specifically**, if you can get them — they are dense, low-water and tart, and they collapse into something jammy rather than watery. Other [plums](#) work with a spoonful of flour tossed through them.
- **Cut side up, pressed in lightly.** The halves sink on their own. Skin down keeps the juice in.
- **Sugar and cinnamon over the top** before baking, which draws juice to the surface and glazes it.
- **Springform, and serve from the base.** The fruit makes it too soft to move cleanly.

Ingredients

One 23 cm springform. Serves 8.

- 115 g unsalted butter, softened
- 150 g granulated sugar
- 150 g all-purpose flour
- 5 g baking powder
- 3 g fine salt
- 2 [eggs](#)
- 1 tsp vanilla — see [Pure vanilla extract](#)
- 12 Italian prune [plums](#), halved and stoned
- 2 tbsp granulated sugar and 5 g [cinnamon](#), mixed, for the top
- juice of half a [lemon](#)

Method

Heat the oven to **175 °C / 350 °F**. Butter a 23 cm springform.

Cream the butter and sugar three minutes. Beat in the eggs one at a time, then the vanilla. Fold in the flour, baking powder and salt.

Spread the batter in the tin — it will be a thin layer, about 1.5 cm, and that is correct.

Arrange the plum halves skin-side down, cut side up, over the whole surface, packed close. Squeeze the lemon juice over and scatter the cinnamon sugar.

Bake **45–50 minutes**, until the cake is golden and a skewer between the fruit comes out clean.

Cool on a rack. Serve warm or at room temperature, with cream.

Notes

- **Freezes exceptionally well**, baked, wrapped in foil. Reheat at 150 °C for 20 minutes. Burros's readers froze them in September and ate them in January, which is a large part of why the recipe is famous.
- Apricots, cherries, damsons, rhubarb or sliced apple all work — see [Apricot](#), [Cherry](#), [Rhubarb](#) and [apple](#).
- **Keeps three days** covered at room temperature.

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