



Highlighting - Eggplant

Orange Blossom Honey Spice Cake With Whipped Cream Cheese Frosting

The secret ingredient is a caramelized honey spiced eggplant addition

Caramelized Veggie Filling:

- 1/4 cup unsalted butter
- 4 cups peeled, diced fresh eggplant
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup Orange Blossom honey
- 1/4 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 6 Tablespoons water
- 1 teaspoon dark balsamic vinegar
- 1-1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

Honey Spice Cake:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2/3 cup medium orange corn grits
- 2 teaspoons baking powder

1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1/2 cup whole milk or unsweetened almond milk

Whipped Cream Cheese Frosting:

8 ounces cream cheese, softened
1/2 teaspoon grated orange zest
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
1 Tablespoon fresh orange juice
1/4 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Garnish: 2 teaspoons orange sanding sugar; fresh orange wedges

Cook Eggplant: Melt butter in medium saucepan over medium heat. When foaming, add eggplant and salt; turn heat up to medium high; cook stirring frequently until eggplant begin to soften and become golden on the edges, about 4 to 5 minutes. Add the honey, pumpkin pie spice and 6 Tablespoons water; reduce heat to medium; cook until soft and caramelized, stirring occasionally about 8 minutes. Add vinegar and continue cooking until eggplant is completely soft, about 2 to 3 minutes more. Remove from heat; stir in vanilla; set aside.

Make Eggplant Puree: Transfer eggplant to food processor; blend, scraping down as needed, until completely smooth. Set aside; let cool. (Can be made up to 1 day in advance; store in airtight container in the refrigerator)

Before Baking Cake: Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Lightly grease and floured pan; line the bottom of 9-1/2 in cake pan with a round silicone pad or parchment paper.

Combine Dry Ingredients: In medium size bowl, whisk flour, orange grits, baking powder and salt to combine; set aside.

Prepare Cake Batter: In large mixing bowl, beat butter and sugar until whipped and fluffy, about 1 minute. Add eggs, one at a time, whipping on medium speed. Add vanilla and eggplant puree; beat to combine for about 3 minutes, Alternately, add dry ingredients and milk, mix to combine each addition. Do not overbeat the batter.

Bake the Cake: Spread batter evenly into prepared pan; bake cake in preheated 350-degree F oven until starts to pull away from pan and is golden brown and firm to touch about 35 to 40 minutes.

Cool Cake: Remove the cake from the oven; put pan on wire rack about 15 minutes. Loosen sides of cake. Remove cake from pan; cool cake completely on wire rack before frosting.

Prepare Frosting: Place cream cheese in large bowl; beat on medium speed until smooth; stir in orange zest, confectioners' sugar, orange juice, and vanilla. Beat frosting until smooth and creamy.

Frost Cake: Spread top of cooled cake with prepared frosting; swirl frosting lightly; sprinkle with sanding sugar; garnish with orange slices as desired. Cut into wedges to serve. Refrigerate any leftover cake. Serves 6 to 8

Cook's Note: I used Professor Torbert's Orange Corn Grits.

Inspired by: *The Vegetable Butcher* Cara Mangini, Workman Publishing, 2016

About the Recipe: This simple cake recipe is full of surprises. It's hard to believe that eggplant is the magic ingredient. It blends the honey, vanilla, spices, and vinegar together into a caramelized filling and also helps to create a complex flavor and moist cake texture. The dense cake easily slices into dessert wedges and is covered with popular fluffy whipped cream cheese frosting. Simply delicious!

Cooking Tips:

"You can bake our smaller eggplants in a traditional way," says Culinary Vegetable Institute Chef Jamie Simpson. "You can also marinate them when still raw and then top them with a sauce. You can braise them or split them in half and then grill them with the cut side facing the heat or sear them in olive oil, again with the cut side facing the heat source." As another technique, eggplants pickle well and that can be kind of fun." Jamie also notes that eggplants oxidize when exposed to the air. To prevent that, you can cut the eggplant and immediately put it into a saltwater brine.

For More Information See: Farmer Lee Jones, *The Chef's Garden*, Avery, 2021.

Health Benefits: [MedicalNewsToday.com](https://www.medicalnewstoday.com) notes how they can help with heart health; in managing cholesterol levels; protecting the body against cancer; assisting in brain health and cognitive function; and helping with eye health. [Healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com) shares how eggplants are vitamin, mineral, fiber, and antioxidant rich and may help with regulating blood sugar and managing weight. Plus, eggplants are included on the website for the [World's Healthiest Foods](https://www.healthline.com/health/worlds-healthiest-foods). For More Information See: <https://www.farmerjonesfarm.com/blogs/news/how-to-cook-eggplant-recipes-and-its-health-benefits>