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Photo Courtesy of Dorie Greenspan

Morning, Noon and Night Thanksgiving Cake / Makes 8 to 10 servings

A word on sweet potatoes: Of course you can use a food processor to coarsely grate them, but I prefer to use the large holes of an old-school box grater, mostly because the cleanup is easier.

A word on the flour: I like mixing a small amount of whole wheat or spelt flour in with the all-purpose—it adds a touch of heartiness to the cake. However, if you don't have either of these flours, don't run out to buy them: the cake is great made with only all-purpose.

Ingredients:

For the cake:

- 2 cups (270 grams) lightly packed grated peeled sweet potatoes or yams
- 1 ½ cups (204 grams) all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup (45 grams) whole wheat or spelt flour (or additional all-purpose flour)
- 1 ¾ teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves or freshly grated nutmeg
- 2/3 cup (133 grams) brown sugar

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- 1/4 cup (50 grams) sugar
- 1 clementine or orange
- 1/2 cup (120 ml) neutral oil
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) pure maple syrup
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup (about 60 grams) pecans or walnuts, preferably lightly toasted, chopped fairly fine
- 1/2 cup (60 grams) moist, plump dried cranberries (optional)

For the glaze (optional):

- ½ cup (100 grams) sugar
- 1/4 cup (60 ml) clementine or orange juice (reserved from the fruit for the cake)
- 3 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup

For the marshmallow frosting (optional):

- 2 tablespoons (1 ounce; 28 grams) very soft unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup (30 grams) confectioners' sugar (plus maybe a bit more)
- 1/2 cup (50 grams) marshmallow crème
- 1/4 teaspoon orange-blossom water (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS:

- Center a rack in the oven and preheat it to 350 degrees F.
- Coat a 9-inch loaf pan with baker's spray or butter, then press a piece of parchment paper over the bottom of the pan and up the two long sides, leaving enough of an overhang to use as lifters when the cake is baked.
- Whisk together both flours, the baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and cloves or nutmeg.
- Put both sugars in a large bowl and grate the zest of the clementine or orange over them. (If you're going to make the glaze, halve the fruit and squeeze the juice; cover and refrigerate until needed.) Reach into the bowl and squish the zest and sugar together until the mixture is moist and fragrant.
- Whisk in the oil—give this a bit of energy to incorporate it smoothly—and then do the same with the maple syrup. You'll have a thick blend.
- One by one, whisk in the eggs—the mixture will get thinner as each egg goes in.
- Gently whisk in about one-third of the dry ingredients.

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- When they're blended in, whisk in half of the remaining dry ingredients. Switch to a flexible spatula and stir in the rest of the flour mixture. When it's almost incorporated, add the grated potatoes, chopped nuts and cranberries, if you're using them, and stir everything together to blend evenly. Scrape the batter into the pan and smooth the top.
- Bake for 53 to 58 minutes, or until the top is honey brown (it will crack), the cake pulls away just a bit from the sides of the pan and, most important, a tester plunged into the center of the cake comes out clean.
- Transfer the pan to a rack and let sit for 10 minutes, then gently lift the cake out of the pan, peel away the parchment and set the cake right side up on the rack.
- If you're going to glaze the cake, you can do it now, while the cake is hot, or wait until it cools. If your plan is to serve the cake just as it is, wait until it cools completely before cutting. In fact, if you can wait a day, that would be even better—wrap the plain cake, tuck it away for a day and you'll have a more flavorful cake—spiced cakes like to have time to come into their own.

Optional Glaze:

- Put all the ingredients in a small saucepan set over medium heat, stir, bring the mixture to a boil and let bubble away for 2 minutes, keeping watch and stirring occasionally to dissolve the sugar. The bubbles will get bigger and the glaze will thicken.
- Remove from the heat. (If you prefer, you can make the glaze in a microwave. It will take about 2 1/2 minutes and you'll need to stop and stir it every 30 seconds.)
- Brush the top of the cake generously with glaze. You'll have more glaze than you need, but it's hard to make a smaller amount. Hold on to the leftover glaze—it's great mixed with butter and spread on slices of cake, especially if you toast them

Optional Marshmallow Frosting:

- Put the butter and sugar in a small bowl and, using an electric mixer, a whisk or a flexible spatula, beat until you've got a smooth and creamy mixture. Getting a good blend will look unpromising at the start, but keep at it.
- Using a spatula, stir in the marshmallow crème, orange-blossom water, if you're using it, and vanilla. The frosting should be creamy, have a beautiful sheen and beckon swoops. If it's too thin—humidity can affect the consistency—beat in a little more sugar.

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- Cover the top of the cake with as little or as much of the frosting as you'd like—if you've made a double recipe, the layer will be generous.

About the Recipe: This Thanksgiving cake is characterized by its moist texture, spicy aroma, and the ability to pair perfectly with a variety of side dishes and beverages throughout the day. It features a harmonious blend of autumn ingredients such as sweet potatoes, cinnamon, cloves, and a touch of orange zest. Serve it warm with hot coffee or tea, as a mid-day snack, or as a festive end to your Thanksgiving celebration.