

## Spiced Apple Coffee Cake

*A delicious final touch, the glaze adds a hint of extra flavor and an attractive sheen to this coffee cake.*

Preheat an oven to 350°F. Grease and flour a 9-inch round springform pan or square baking pan or baking dish.

To make the cake, in a bowl, stir together the flour, baking powder and salt.

In another bowl, toss the apples with the juice. In a small bowl, stir together the brown sugar, cardamom and cinnamon. Add to the apples and toss to coat. Set aside.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the flat beater, combine the butter, cream cheese, granulated sugar and vanilla and beat on medium speed until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the flour mixture in 2 or 3 additions and beat well until smooth. Using a large rubber spatula, gently fold in the apples just until evenly distributed, no more than a few strokes. Do not overmix. Spoon the batter into the prepared pan and spread evenly.

Bake until the top is golden brown and a toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean, 60 to 70 minutes. Transfer the pan to a wire rack and let cool for 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the glaze: In a small bowl, whisk together the confectioners' sugar, the 2 Tbs. milk and the vanilla until smooth and pourable. Adjust the consistency of the glaze by adding more milk, a few drops at a time, if needed.

Remove the sides of the springform pan, if using, and place the cake on a wire rack set over a piece of waxed paper to catch any drips. While the cake is warm, drizzle with the glaze. Let the cake cool to room temperature. Cut into wedges or squares to serve. Makes one 9-inch cake.

**Note:** If using a glass baking dish, reduce the oven temperature to 325°F.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, *Muffins*, by Beth Hensperger (Simon & Schuster, 2003).

### Ingredients for Spiced Apple Coffee Cake

**For the cake:**

1¾ cups all-purpose flour

1½ tsp. baking powder

¼ tsp. salt

3 tart cooking apples, such as Granny Smith or Braeburn, 1 lb. total, peeled, cored and coarsely chopped

2 Tbs. strained fresh orange juice, lemon juice or apple juice

⅓ cup firmly packed light brown sugar

1½ tsp. ground cardamom

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

8 Tbs. (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature

8 oz. cream cheese, at room temperature

1½ cups granulated sugar

1 tsp. vanilla extract

2 eggs

**For the vanilla glaze:**

¾ cup confectioners' sugar, sifted

2 Tbs. condensed skim milk, warmed, plus more as needed

½ tsp. vanilla extract

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## All About Pears

A perfectly ripe pear has soft, juicy flesh with delicately floral flavor. Sweet, fragrant pears are available year-round, but their peak season is during the cold months of winter, a time when their freshness is especially welcome. The many different varieties of pear are all generously curved in the fruit's well-known shape, but they range in color, contour, texture and flavor.

### Selecting

Pears are picked when mature but still hard, rather than when they are ripe. This prevents them from becoming too granular and soft. Look for smooth, unblemished fruits with their stems still attached. They should be fragrant and just beginning to soften near the stem. They must be left at room temperature to soften and sweeten and are ready to eat when they wrinkle a little at the stem end and are slightly soft at the blossom end.

### Storing

Handle pears gently, for they bruise easily. Leave them at room temperature for a few days to ripen. Pears are notorious for having an extremely brief period of ripeness between being still too hard to eat and heading toward spoiling. They can be refrigerated in plastic bags for 3 to 5 days, depending on their degree of ripeness, but for the best flavor, bring them back to room temperature before eating.

### Preparing

Pears can be left unpeeled for eating fresh, but peel them before cooking; some fruits may have tough skins with a slightly bitter flavor that is accentuated when cooked. When cutting pears for salads or hors d'oeuvres, halve them lengthwise, then scoop out the core with a small spoon or melon baller. Toss cut pears with a little lemon juice to prevent discoloring.

Adapted from *Williams-Sonoma Kitchen Companion* (Time-Life Books, 2000).

## WILLIAMS-SONOMA

# Technique Class: Fall Baking

*A dessert that takes advantage of fresh fruit is the most simple, wholesome and enjoyable way to end a meal. Autumn specialties such as an apple-pear crisp, warm turnovers or a coffee cake flavored with cinnamon and cardamom are always welcome and comforting.*

## All About Apples

It should be easy to eat an apple a day, considering they are perhaps the most common tree fruit in the world. There are some 7,000 known apple varieties in the world today. Of course, far fewer are available to the average shopper. The most common varieties sold in the United States are Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, Gala and McIntosh. Keep an eye out for recently revived heirloom apples—old-fashioned varieties that fell out of favor with big commercial growers because of difficulties in large-scale growing, storing and shipping. Many kinds with excellent flavor and texture can be found in farmers' or specialty markets.

### Selecting

Look for unbroken skin with good color and no soft brown spots. Whenever possible, buy newly harvested local apples. Most are picked in autumn or winter, although a few summer varieties (Maiden Blush, Transparent, Gravenstein) exist.

Although some apple lovers may insist that the sweeter apples, such as Fuji and Gala, are good for eating out of hand, while tarter, firmer ones, such as Granny Smith, are better suited for cooking and baking, these sweet and tart distinctions are completely subjective.

### Storing

Because apples continue to ripen at room temperature, refrigerate them in the cold back part of the refrigerator for 1 week or longer. If you plan to eat them soon after purchase, they can be held at room temperature for a few days.

### Preparing

A small, sharp knife is all you need for peeling and slicing apples, although a vegetable peeler may be easier for the novice cook to use. Specially designed apple corers are available. Exposed apple flesh quickly discolors unless it is rubbed with lemon or other citrus juice. Since the skin of the apple contains so many nutrients, it is a good idea to leave it on when possible.

Adapted from *Williams-Sonoma Kitchen Companion* (Time-Life Books, 2000).

### Ingredients for Apple-Pear Turnovers

**For the filling:**

2 apples, about ¾ lb. total

1 firm but ripe pear, about ½ lb.

½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar

1 Tbs. all-purpose flour

½ tsp. vanilla extract

½ tsp. ground cinnamon

1 pinch freshly grated nutmeg

½ cup raisins (optional)

**For the pastry:**

All-purpose flour for rolling

2 frozen puff pastry sheets, each 9½ inches square, thawed

1 egg

2 Tbs. granulated sugar

## Apple-Pear Turnovers

*Be sure to seal the edges of the turnovers so the filling doesn't ooze out.*

Position 2 oven racks evenly in the oven near the center so there is space in between them. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Grease 2 baking sheets with butter.

To prepare the filling, peel, core and cut the apples and pear into small chunks. Put the chunks into a bowl. Add the brown sugar, flour, vanilla, cinnamon, nutmeg and raisins and stir together with a wooden spoon.

To prepare the pastry, sprinkle a work surface with some flour. Unfold 1 of the thawed puff pastry sheets on top of the flour. Keep the other sheet wrapped in the refrigerator.

Sprinkle some flour on the pastry. Using a rolling pin, and beginning at the center of the pastry, roll out to the far side. Then roll from the center toward you. After every few rolls, give the pastry a quarter turn and sprinkle the top and bottom of the pastry with more of the flour so the pastry does not stick. Keep rolling and sprinkling until the pastry is a 12½-inch square.

Using a ruler and a pizza wheel or table knife, trim the edges to make a 12-inch square. Pull away the scraps of dough and discard. Cut the 12-inch square into 4 equal 6-inch squares.

Spoon ⅓ cup of the filling into the center of each square. Spread the filling across the middle toward 2 opposite points.

In a small bowl, beat the egg with a fork. Using a pastry brush, brush the beaten egg along 2 edges of each square. Fold one-half of each square over the filling, enclosing it fully and forming a triangle. Press the edges together with a fork to seal them.

Place the 4 turnovers on a prepared baking sheet, spacing them 2 inches apart. Repeat with the remaining puff pastry sheet and filling.

Using the pastry brush, brush the tops of the turnovers with the beaten egg. Sprinkle the turnovers with the granulated sugar. Put 1 baking sheet on the upper rack in the oven and the other sheet on the lower rack and bake for 10 minutes. Reverse the positions of the baking sheets on the oven racks. Continue baking until the turnovers are puffed and brown, about 15 minutes more.

Transfer the baking sheets to wire racks and let cool for 10 minutes. Makes 8 large turnovers.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Kids Baking*, by Abigail Johnson Dodge (Oxmoor House, 2003).

## Carrot-Apple-Nut Muffins

*These moist and fruity muffins get raves for being a great breakfast bread to eat on the run. They offer many options for flavor variations with nuts and dried fruits; play with different combinations to find your personal favorite. Dried cranberries or cherries are an excellent alternative to raisins. Oat or wheat bran and the fruits and carrots add a nice boost of fiber. Because this recipe yields sixteen muffins, you will need two standard muffin pans. Always fill any empty muffin cups with water to prevent scorching in the oven.*

Preheat an oven to 400°F. Butter 16 standard muffin-pan cups or line with paper liners.

In a large bowl, stir together the all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, bran, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and brown sugar. Set aside.

To make the batter by hand, in a large bowl, whisk the eggs until blended. Stir in the yogurt and butter. Pour over the flour mixture and stir with a rubber spatula just until half moistened, 8 to 10 strokes. Add the apple, carrots, nuts and raisins and stir just until evenly distributed. Do not overmix.

To make the batter with an electric mixer, in a large bowl, beat the eggs on low speed until blended, then beat in the yogurt and butter. Add the flour mixture and beat just until half moistened. Add the apple, carrots, nuts and raisins and stir just until evenly distributed. Do not overmix.

Spoon the batter into the prepared muffin cups, filling each cup about three-fourths full. Sprinkle the cinnamon sugar evenly over the tops. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean, 15 to 18 minutes. Transfer the pan to a wire rack and let cool for 2 minutes, then turn the muffins out onto the rack. Serve warm. The muffins may be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 2 days, or frozen for up to 1 month. Makes 16 muffins.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Essentials of Baking*, by Cathy Burgett, Elinor Klivans & Lou Seibert Pappas (Oxmoor House, 2003).

## Apple-Pear Crisp

Preheat an oven to 375°F. Butter a 9-by-13-inch baking dish.

Halve and core each apple, then cut into 1-inch cubes. Repeat with the pears. Put all the fruit in the prepared baking dish. Drizzle with the lemon juice, turning the fruit once or twice to mix well. Spread the fruit evenly in the dish.

In a bowl, stir together the flour, brown sugar and salt. Add the butter and, using a pastry blender or 2 knives, cut the butter into the flour mixture until the mixture is grainy and the butter pieces are about the size of small peas. Add the pine nuts and mix with a fork or your fingers. Spread the topping evenly over the fruit.

Bake until the crisp is bubbling around the edges and golden on top, about 50 minutes. Transfer the baking dish to a wire rack and let cool for 10 to 15 minutes. Serve warm with a dollop of whipped cream. Serves 6 to 8.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Entertaining with the Seasons* (Free Press, 2010).

### Ingredients for Carrot-Apple-Nut Muffins

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 cup whole wheat flour

¼ cup oat bran or wheat bran

2 tsp. baking powder

½ tsp. baking soda

¼ tsp. salt

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

⅔ cup firmly packed dark brown sugar

2 eggs

1½ cups plain yogurt or 1½ cups buttermilk

4 Tbs. (½ stick) unsalted butter, melted

1¼ cups grated, peeled tart apple (about 1 large)

1¼ cups finely grated, peeled carrots (about 2 medium)

½ cup chopped walnuts or pecans, toasted

½ cup golden raisins

2 Tbs. granulated sugar mixed with 1 tsp. ground cinnamon

**Ingredients for Apple-Pear Crisp**

1 lb. apples, peeled

1 lb. pears, peeled

2 tsp. fresh lemon juice

¾ cup all-purpose flour

⅔ cup firmly packed light brown sugar

⅞ tsp. salt

4 Tbs. (½ stick) cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes

2 Tbs. pine nuts

Lightly whipped cream for serving