

Apple Crunch Cake

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour 3 9-inch cake pans, line the bottoms with parchment paper, grease the paper.

1 cup pure maple syrup
3-Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and cut into eights

In a large saucepan, bring the maple syrup to a boil over high heat, then simmer over low heat until reduced to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup, about 20 minutes. Pour thickened syrup into one cake pan. Arrange the apples in 2 concentric circles, overlapping slightly.

1 cup cinnamon graham cracker crumbs
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup brown sugar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped pecans
1 stick of butter melted

Combine in a small bowl. Divide in half and press into an even layer into the other 2 of the 3 pans. Make the cake batter, recipe follows.

Chop up enough Granny Smith apples to make 2 cups. Set aside.

Sift together the following, set aside:

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon apple pie spice
1 teaspoon salt

Whisk together and set aside:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole milk and 1 cup sour cream in a 2-cup liquid measuring cup.

Cream together until light and fluffy:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter, at room temperature
1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar

Add 2 eggs, one at a time. Add 1 teaspoon of vanilla.

Add the sour cream mixture and the sifted dry ingredients to the butter and egg mixture alternately, a little at a time until combined. Stir in the 2 cups of chopped apples. Divide equally between the 3 prepared pans. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes until toothpick comes out clean when put in the center of one of the layers.

Cool in pans on a rack for 10 minutes. Carefully remove from pans. Cool layers from pans with graham cracker crust side up. Apple layer can cool as usual; making sure to rearrange any apples that shifted. When layers are completely cool, make browned butter icing. Melt 1 stick of butter in a small pan on medium heat until melted and browned. Cool to room temperature. Add to 8 ounces of softened cream cheese in mixer bowl. Gradually add 4 cups of sifted powdered sugar and 1 teaspoon of vanilla. Beat until fluffy.

To assemble cake:

Put one layer, graham cracker crust side up on serving plate. Frost with a small amount of the icing. Spread about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of apple butter on top of icing. Repeat with second graham cracker layer. Add plain layer on top and frost the sides of the cake. Refrigerate cake until serving.