

## SIMNEL CAKE

(BBC Recipe)

### Ingredients

#### For the almond paste:

250g/9oz caster sugar  
250g/9oz ground almonds  
2 eggs, beaten  
1 tsp almond essence

#### For the cake:

175g/6oz butter or margarine  
175g/6oz soft brown sugar  
3 eggs, beaten  
175g/6oz plain flour  
Pinch of salt  
½ tsp ground mixed spice (optional)  
350g/12oz mixed raisins, currants and sultanas  
55g/2oz chopped mixed peel  
½ lemon, grated zest only  
1-2 tbsp apricot jam  
1 egg, beaten, for glazing

### Preparation

1. For the almond paste, place sugar and ground almonds in a bowl. Mix in enough beaten egg to obtain a fairly soft consistency.
2. Add almond essence and knead for 1 min. until paste is smooth and pliable.
3. Roll out a third of the almond paste to make a circle 18cm/7in in diameter and reserve the remainder for the cake topping.
4. Heat oven to 140C/275F/Gas 1. Grease and line a 18cm/7in cake tin.
5. For the cake, cream butter and sugar together until pale and fluffy. Gradually beat in eggs until well incorporated and then sift in flour, salt and mixed spice (if using) a little at a time. Finally, stir in mixed dried fruit, peel and grated lemon zest.
6. Put half mixture into greased and lined cake tin. Smooth top and cover with circle of almond paste. Add rest of cake mixture and smooth top, leaving slight dip in centre to allow for cake to rise. Bake in preheated oven for 1 ¾ hrs. Test by inserting skewer in middle of cake – if it comes out clean, it is ready. Once baked, remove from oven and allow to cool on wire rack.
7. Brush top of cooled cake with apricot jam. Divide remainder of almond paste in half; roll out circle to cover top of cake with one half and form 11 small balls with other half.
8. Place circle of paste on jam glaze and set balls round edge. Brush cake topping with a little beaten egg.
9. Heat grill to high. Place cake on a baking tray and grill for 1-2 mins, or until top of marzipan begins to brown. (Alternatively, lightly heat cake topping using a cook's blow torch, until marzipan is golden-brown.)