



IT'S A SIGNATURE AT CHRISTMAS

This festive, family favourite is beautifully hand decorated with a showstopping wreath. To make a 6" cake, simply half the ingredients listed.

Prep time 1 hour 30 minutes | Cook Time 3 hours 30 minutes | Serves 12-20

Ingredients for the Christmas cake:

300g natural-colour glacé cherries, washed and halved
240g sultanas
360g raisins
360g currants
100g mixed peel
40g glaze ginger (or finely chopped stem ginger)
200g salted butter
200g molasses sugar
200g plain flour
4 Clarence Court Burford Brown eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
Pinch of ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon mixed spice
160ml brandy, plus more to feed (about 6–10 tablespoons, to taste)
70ml vodka

Ingredients to ice:

Apricot jam, for glazing
2 x 454g blocks ready-made marzipan
23cm fruit cake
Icing sugar, for dusting
1kg white fondant icing
Brandy or vodka, for brushing
100g royal icing, mixed to soft peak according to pack instructions

Ingredients for the wreath:

150g green sugar paste
250g stiff peak green royal icing in a piping bag fitted with a leaf nozzle
A selection of colours for the mini decorations
Pretty sprinkles
Gold edible paint or lustre dust



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Method for the Christmas cake:

Preheat the oven to 140C. Grease, base and side line an 8" round solid base cake tin (min 3" depth) (or 6" round cake in, 3" depth if doing half this quantity)

Place the dried fruit, peel and glace ginger into a large bowl big enough to hold the entire mix and mix together with a large wooden spoon.

Place the butter and sugar in a small, microwave-safe bowl and heat for 1 minute at a time, stirring with a whisk at each interval, to mix the butter and sugar together. If you don't have a microwave, do this in a non-stick pan over a low heat and melt gently.

Beat the eggs together with the vanilla extract.

Add the spices to your flour and mix well with a metal spoon or whisk to disperse.

Add the spiced flour to the fruit and toss over with your hands to mix through.

Tip the warm butter and sugar mix into the large bowl of fruit and mix well. Add the beaten egg and mix well. Finally add your brandy and vodka.

Place in the oven and bake for 1 hour, then turn the heat down to 125°C and continue to bake until completely cooked through. This will take approximately 2–2 ½ hours, depending on your oven. Check that a sharp knife or a skewer comes out almost clean.

Whilst still hot, spike all over the cake with a skewer to make holes and pour over more brandy to soak the cake.

Once cooled, double wrap in parchment and then wrap in strong foil. You can eat this after a week but ideally make a few weeks before you need it, and you can store it in a cool dry place for up to a year, feeding with extra brandy if you wish on occasion.

Method for covering with the marzipan:

Heat the apricot jam gently in a pan until soft, runny and brush-able.

Press a few pieces of marzipan onto the cake board so the cake won't slide around, then brush the marzipan and board with jam.

Put the cake upside-down on the board so you have a flat, sharp-edged surface to ice, then brush all over with jam. If the cake is uneven or pitted, use marzipan pieces to plug the gaps, then smooth with your finger so you won't get any bumps when you cover the cake. Roll out thin sausages of marzipan and use to fill any gaps between the bottom of the cake and the board. Smooth them over with your finger.

Dust the work surface with a little icing sugar and knead the marzipan blocks together until pliable. Roll out until 0.5cm thick and about 45cm in diameter. Keep it roughly circular by rolling from the centre outwards and giving it a quarter-turn as you go. You can use marzipan spacers to help you roll to an even thickness.

Position the spacers either side of the marzipan and roll it out. When the rolling pin is running up and down the spacers and not pressing on the marzipan it's the correct thickness. You may need to widen the sticks as the marzipan gets larger. Sweep a little icing sugar under the marzipan as you work so it doesn't stick to the work surface and dust the top as well – but not too much or the marzipan might become dry and brittle.



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For the ultimate finish, once the marzipan is rolled, use a smoother to polish the surface.

Wrap the marzipan loosely around the rolling pin to lift it, then unroll it over the cake so it's evenly covered, with the excess draping around the sides. Working as quickly as you can, use your hands to smooth the top of the marzipan from the centre out towards the edges, pushing out any trapped air. If using smoothers, polish the top of the cake to make a perfect flat top.

Gently press around the top edge to fold the marzipan down over the sides and over the cake board, being careful not to pull down or it may rip. If the marzipan starts to crease, gently lift it up at the creasing point, smooth it out, then continue. Use a sharp knife to trim off most of the excess marzipan, leaving a 2cm border around the cake board. Lift the cake, on its board, on to a large upturned bowl with a large flat base or on to a turntable.

Make sure the marzipan fits neatly around the sides and at the base (use side smoothers if you have them), then run a knife along the underside of the board to cut off excess marzipan. Save the trimmings in a food bag to use again.

Examine the cake for any air bubbles under the marzipan. If you find one, insert a pin into it, then expel the air by gently pressing around the hole. Finally, smooth again over the top, sides and edges using the flat of your hand or smoothers. Leave the marzipan to dry overnight so it can harden.

Method for covering in sugar paste:

Apply the sugar paste to your cake the same way as the marzipan, following steps 4 to 10. Roll the sugar paste out until it's 0.5cm thick and 50cm in diameter. The only difference is that you brush the marzipan with brandy or vodka – NOT apricot jam – to stick the icing on. Smooth and trim the layer of sugar paste just as with the marzipan. Once the cake is iced, leave it to set for a day before fixing on the iced biscuits.

Method for the wreath base piped decoration:

Roll the green icing into a sausage long enough to go around the top edge of the cake for the wreath base.

Pipe spiky foliage all over the icing to create a green leafy design.

Place all your decorations around the wreath to finish!

Method for making the decorations:

If you wish to make any little Christmas sugar shapes, you can do this the day before or even a few weeks before and leave in a cake box until needed as it is much easier to let them set before trying to stick them on the cake.

Roll these out and cut out shapes, leave to dry overnight. Juliet's made gingerbread men, pine cones, mini Clarence court eggs and holly and berries. I added some piping for the gingerbread men with a small amount of white soft peak royal icing.

The pine cones are made by simple hand moulding. Roll little pieces into a cone shape and snip over with small scissors to make spikey. Leave to dry.



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She has also made some little eggs, that look very festive!

These are hand moulded by making a little ball, then moulding it into more of an egg shape with a slightly pointed top. She has used a baby blue colour mixed with a little mint for the Old Cotswold Legbars, white for the leghorns and some caramel colour with added edible gold lustre to make some golden festive eggs.

For the candy canes, roll two small long sausages of different coloured icing on the table, place next to each other and pinch together at one end. Twist together to create the candy cane effect then roll again to seal together.

The beauty of this design is that you can really decorate with any sugar décor you like. Shiny colourful sprinkles will add a lovely pop of colour!



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FABULOUS EGGS BY FABULOUS BIRDS SINCE 1928



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