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**Nottingham**

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# A Great Plumb Cake



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Firstly, let's address the most vital piece of information about this so called Plumb (Plum) cake before we get started...

**...it doesn't actually contain any plums!**

This is a common observation in all of the many plumb recipes which Manuscripts and Special Collections hold. Instead currants are used in every recipe.

Caroline Kelly, Team Leader for the Manuscripts and Special Collections, is a keen and skilled baker. Caroline demonstrates how to recreate this plum cake using ingredients as close to the original as possible...



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# Ingredients

(1/4 of the original quantity):

- 1 1/4 lb plain flour
- 1 1/4 lb currants
- 1 1/2 nutmegs (grated)
- 2 1/2 blades of mace (beaten)
- 5 egg yolks
- 1 egg white
- 1/4 pint good ale yeast
- 1/2 pint double cream
- 4oz butter
- 2oz sugar
- 2oz mixed peel
- a pinch of salt



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# Step 1

Prepare your tins. We used one 6in and 7in tin. Line the bottom and sides of your tins with greaseproof paper\* (adding slits to the side panels will help it fit nicely around the bottom of your tin).

Preheat oven to 150°C (gas mark 2) and 140°C (gas mark 1) for a fan-assisted oven.

\*This recipe is from a time when greaseproof paper did not exist. Originally just butter would be used to grease the tin. As an extra measure you can also grease the tins with some butter before putting in the paper.



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# Step 2

Combine the yeast powder with a teaspoon of sugar and  $\frac{1}{4}$  pint of lukewarm water.

Leave for 15 minutes.



# Step 3

Place the flour\*, currants, grated nutmeg and mace, mixed peel and the sugar in a mixing bowl.

Add a pinch of salt and set to one side.

\*The instructions ask for the flour to be dried in the oven as it may have been moist as a result of being stored in sacks.

It may also have been necessary to remove insects such as weevils; this has not been included in the instructions!





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# Step 4

Separate five eggs.

Add five yolks to one bowl and one egg white into a separate bowl.

Beat the egg yolks.



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# Step 5

Measure out the butter and melt it gently in a saucepan.





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# Step 6

Add the beaten egg yolks and the unbeaten egg white to the yeast.

Add a teaspoon of sugar to the double cream to sweeten and add to the yeast mixture.



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# Step 7

Pour the yeast mixture into a clean bowl through a sieve to remove any lumps.



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# Step 8

Add the melted butter and the yeast mixture to the flour mix and stir well to combine.

Cover and place in a warm place for an hour.

The recipe recommends placing it in front of a fire but we used an airing cupboard.



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# Step 9

Bake the cakes for about an hour and then check them.

The 6 inch tin should take 75 minutes and the 7 inch should take 90 minutes.

Remove the cakes from the oven and leave to cool before taking them out of the tins.



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# Step 10

Serve with Christmas cheer!

It's a very interesting consistency, somewhere between cake and bread. It reminds us of stollen.

It's quite dense and it would lend itself well to being sliced up with butter spread on top.

