

Rustic French Apple Cake

A tender apple cake with brown butter, crisp apples and a sugared crust.

Ingredients

½ cup unsalted butter divided

¾ cup granulated sugar

2 large eggs

1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract

1 tablespoon rum

¼ cup sour cream

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

¼ to ½ teaspoon fine salt

3 small or 2 large crisp apples

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1 tablespoon granulated sugar, for the crust

2 tablespoons turbinado sugar, for the crust

Preparation

Butter the sides of a 9-inch round cake pan and line the bottom with parchment paper. Lightly butter the parchment, then sprinkle with about 1 tablespoon of granulated sugar, tilting the pan so the sugar coats the bottom evenly.

Whisk together the flour, baking powder and salt. Set aside.

Peel 3 small or 2 large crisp apples. Cut the slices, then dice into bite-size pieces. Place in a bowl and toss with the lemon juice to prevent browning.

Melt ½ cup of the butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Continue cooking until the butter is golden brown and fragrant. Remove from the heat and let cool until it has solidified again.

Place the solidified browned butter in a mixing bowl. Add 2/3 cup of the sugar and cream on low speed until combined, then beat on medium speed for about 1 ½ minutes.

Crack the eggs into a clean bowl. With the mixer on low, add the first egg and blend for about 30 seconds. Add the vanilla and rum, then blend briefly. Add the sour cream and mix slowly until light and smooth.

Add the flour mixture to the butter mixture and mix at a very low speed just until incorporated. Fold in the apples, making sure all of the pieces are coated in batter.

Transfer the batter to the prepared 9-inch cake pan and gently spread it to the edges. Sprinkle the top with remaining 1 tablespoon of granulated sugar, then sprinkle evenly with the turbinado sugar.

Bake in a preheated 350 F. oven for 45-50 minutes, or until the cake is deeply golden and a tester inserted in the center comes out clean or with a few moist crumbs.

While the cake is still hot, sprinkle the top with an additional 1 teaspoon turbinado sugar. Let cook for about 20 minutes. Carefully flip the cake out of the pan, then flip it back upright. Cool for 1 hour before slicing.

COOK'S NOTE: The browned butter is the signature of this cake, adding a warm, nutty depth to the apples. For the best texture, use crisp apples that hold their shape during baking and allow the cake to cool fully before slicing.