

HONEY CAKE

Key to making a knockout honey cake: It all sounds good in theory. Want to celebrate Rosh Hashanah, wishing for a sweet year? Easy, eat some sweet honey cake, a moist, slightly sticky treat, fragrant with spices. The reality of the taste doesn't always live up to the sweet symbolism, though. All too often, a slice of honey cake ends up being dry, strangely tough, and packed with cloying spice. Here are the five signs that a honey cake will live up to the sweet dream:

1. **Enough oil in the batter** – One big reason why honey cake often ends up so dry? Not enough fat in the batter. The healthy helping of honey in the batter convinces some recipe developers that they only need a few spoonfuls of vegetable oil. Wrong. At least a cup is needed for a truly moist crumb.
2. **Sugar as well as honey** – It's also easy to assume that if you're making honey cake, there's no need for non-honey sweeteners. Nope: since honey is super-dense, it'll weigh the cake down if you rely on it exclusively as your source of sweetness. The best recipes have nearly equal parts of honey and sugar (or even brown sugar).
3. **Three kinds of spices** – Moist honey cakes cry out for the addition of sweet spices to add nuance to the honey's subtle sweetness, but some recipes just call for cinnamon. A trio of sweet spices, like cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves, deliver a deeper, richer flavor.
4. **A cup of coffee and citrus** – So now you've got plenty of sweetness, richness, and spice. That means you need something sharp and acidic to balance out these flavors. An ingredient list that calls for brewed coffee and orange juice or zest fits the bill nicely (a little booze never hurt, either).
5. **An overnight rest** – Most honey cake recipes will point out that the treat will keep for at least a couple of days. But only a truly brilliant one will assert that honey cake is actually *better* when baked a day in advance. Like gingerbread and its French cousin, *pain d'épices*, honey cake mellows and deepens in flavor when it gets an overnight rest.

Orange Honey Cake

Ingredients:

- 1 cup oil
- 2/3 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup honey
- 1 cup orange marmalade (preferably all fruit)
- 4 eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup strong coffee at room temperature

- 3 tablespoons rum or brandy
- 3 cups all-purpose flour (I've made the cake using whole wheat for some of the all-purpose with success.)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon each: cinnamon, allspice & ginger
- ½ cup sliced almonds (optional)

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F.
2. Whisk the liquid ingredients (first 7 ingredients) together in a bowl. In a separate bowl, combine the remaining dry ingredients (last 5 ingredients).
3. Combine both mixtures thoroughly, mixing only until combined. Pour the batter into a greased tube pan (Though I've used a decorative bundt pan.), and bake for 1 hour, or a little longer, until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
4. Let cake cool in pan on a rack for 20 minutes. Loosen from pan and invert onto serving plate.

Using Beehive pan: Bake 30 minutes. Cool in pan 15 minutes & unmold.

Majestic & Moist Honey Cake

(Adapted from Marcy Goldman's Treasure of Jewish Holiday Baking)

Every honey cake I have been forced to try has been wretched (apologies if it was yours). They were dry and never sweet enough. They were coarse and totally unloved. And if I find myself at an occasion where I see a honey cake, well, I wonder why they didn't ask me to make dessert instead, but then I steer clear of it just the same. This life is too short to eat terrible cake.

It hit me: Right, this is my job! This is what I do! I take things that I think are terrible and I try to find a better way to go about them. That's why this person emailed me, right? (Sometimes I forget.) And seeing as I don't dislike honey, and I don't hate spices and I don't hate tradition or the Jewish New Year, well, it was time.

I'll tell you what I do know, though: This honey cake is perfect. It's warmly spiced and crazy moist and soft and plush with a little crisp edge about the corners and if you know someone with a thing for honey cake, be they bringing in the year 5769 with revelry or not, you've got to wow them with this one. Concave or not, it is everything honey cake was once supposed to be, and with this recipe, might be again.

Ingredients:

3 1/2 cups (440 grams) all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon (15 grams) baking powder
1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
4 teaspoons (about 8 grams) ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
1 cup (235 ml) vegetable oil
1 cup (340 grams) honey
1 1/2 cups (300 grams) granulated sugar
1/2 cup (95 grams) brown sugar
3 large eggs at room temperature
1 teaspoon (5 ml) vanilla extract
1 cup warm (235 ml) coffee or strong tea
1/2 cup (120 ml) fresh orange juice
1/4 cup (60 ml) rye or whiskey
1/2 cup (45 to 55 grams) slivered or sliced almonds (optional)

Directions:

1. Fits in three loaf pans, two 9-inch square or round cake pans, one 9 or 10 inch tube or bundt cake pan, or one 9 by 13 inch sheet cake. I made mine in two full-size loaf pans plus two miniature ones.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F. Generously grease pan(s) with non-stick cooking spray. For tube or angel food pans, line the bottom with lightly greased parchment paper, cut to fit.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, cloves and allspice. Make a well in the center, and add oil, honey, white sugar, brown sugars, eggs, vanilla, coffee or tea, orange juice and rye or whiskey, if using. (If you measure your oil before the honey, it will be easier to get all of the honey out.)
4. Using a strong wire whisk or in an electric mixer on slow speed, stir together well to make a thick, well-blended batter, making sure that no ingredients are stuck to the bottom.
5. Spoon batter into prepared pan(s). Sprinkle top of cake(s) evenly with almonds, if using. Place cake pan(s) on two baking sheets, stacked together (this will ensure the cakes bake properly with the bottom baking faster than the cake interior and top).

6. Bake until cake tests done, that is, it springs back when you gently touch the cake center. For angel and tube cake pans, this will take 60 to 75 minutes, loaf cakes, about 45 to 55 minutes. For sheet style cakes, baking time is 40 to 45 minutes.
7. Let cake stand fifteen minutes before removing from pan.