

BROWN SUGAR CAKE

This deconstructed upside-down cake is more than just a twist on a favorite technique. The brown sugar, butter, and cream bake into the cake, creating a deliciously crunchy caramel topping. Using almond flour along with all-purpose flour adds a nutty richness. I often serve seasonal roasted fruit or a fruit compote (which recalls the classic) and a scoop of homemade ice cream on the side, but the cake is just as good on its own.

MAKES ONE 10-INCH CAKE

BROWN SUGAR TOPPING AND FILLING

- 1 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 4 tablespoons (½ stick) unsalted butter
- ¼ cup heavy cream

CAKE

- 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- ⅔ cup almond flour (see page 10)
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- 8 ounces (2 sticks) unsalted butter, very soft, plus more for the pan
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup packed dark brown sugar
- ¾ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 3 large eggs

FOR THE BROWN SUGAR TOPPING AND FILLING: Put the brown sugar in a medium bowl. In a small saucepan, bring the butter and heavy cream to a boil. Remove from the heat and pour over the brown sugar. Whisk until no lumps remain. Use immediately, or cover and refrigerate for up to 1 week.

FOR THE CAKE: Position a rack in the center of the oven and preheat the oven to 350°F. Butter a 10-inch round cake pan, and line the bottom with a round of parchment paper.

Cover the bottom of the prepared cake pan with three quarters of the brown sugar topping, spreading it out to make an even layer. Freeze for at least 5 minutes, or until ready to fill. Reserve the remaining mixture to use as a filling

In a medium bowl, sift together the all-purpose flour, almond flour, baking powder, and salt.

In the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat the butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, and vanilla on medium-high speed until smooth, about 2 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating until each is well combined before adding the next. Scrape down the sides of the bowl as needed.

Remove the bowl from the mixer, and using a spatula, fold in the flour mixture. Pour the batter into the cake pan, over the topping, and smooth it out with a spatula. Put the pan on a baking sheet and bake until the cake begins to rise around the edges, about 30 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven and insert a scant teaspoon of the brown sugar filling in ten spots on the cake, sinking it down into the center.

Return the cake to the oven and bake until it is golden brown and firm to the touch, 15 to 20 minutes. Turn the cake out of the pan onto a plate and serve it immediately; or let it cool in the pan on a wire rack and then reheat it in a 350°F oven for 5 minutes before turning it out onto a plate and serving.

The cake is best eaten the day it is baked but can be kept at room temperature, loosely covered in plastic wrap, for up to 2 days.

VARYING YOUR CRAFT

CLASSIC UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE

Spread all of the topping in the cake pan. Add 2 cups sliced fruit (such as apple) or whole fruit (such as cranberries) of your choice, and then add the batter. Bake as directed above.

COMBINING YOUR CRAFT

In the summer, serve this cake with scoops of Strawberry Ice Cream (page 212) and spoonfuls of Fresh Raspberry Compote (page 235). For fall and winter occasions, serve it with scoops of Saigon Cinnamon Ice Cream (page 205) and Rosé Poached Pears (page 232).