

APPLE SPICE CHESTNUT CAKE

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Italians use chestnut flour to make a traditional cake, castagnaccio, which is thin and dense rather than light and fluffy. It's usually sprinkled with rosemary, raisins, walnuts, and/or pine nuts.

Instead of sticking with tradition, I've opted to create an autumnal version instead. The combination of chestnuts, apples, spices, and crystallized ginger works wonderfully together.

This may be the healthiest (yet still scrumptious) cake you ever eat.

Chestnuts contain little fat and no gluten. Plus, chestnut flour contains fewer calories than wheat flour with the same amount of protein.

And because this cake includes only a small amount of added sugar and oil, you won't waddle away from the table groaning, "Mamma Mia! Why did I eat an entire slice of this thing?"

If you want to make this sugar-free, omit the crystallized ginger and substitute your favorite granulated sweetener for the sugar. (I haven't tried this myself, so if you do it this way leave a comment below to let others know how well it worked.)

You can eat this the way Italians do, as a dessert or snack. To me, it's perfect on a crisp, fall morning for breakfast, paired with a cup of coffee.

Sweet!

[Note: the most likely stores to carry chestnut flour and packaged chestnuts include specialty grocers (Italian, French, Asian), gourmet shops, and natural/organic supermarkets (like Whole Foods). You can also order them online from specialty sites like Nuts.com or on [Amazon](http://Amazon.com).]

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 medium apple, peeled and chopped

1/4 tsp. cinnamon

1/4 tsp. nutmeg

1/4 tsp. allspice

1 tsp. brown sugar

1/4 cup ginger beer/ginger ale

1 1/2 cups chestnut flour
1 Tbs. raw sugar
Pinch of salt
1 1/2 cups water

2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil

1 Tbs. minced crystallized ginger (optional)
4 - 5 cooked chestnuts, peeled and chopped

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat oven to 400 F / 200 C.

Heat a frying pan on medium-low heat. Add the apples, spices, brown sugar, and ginger beer.

Cook, stirring, until the apples soften and the ginger beer has evaporated. Remove the pan from the heat and set aside.

Into a medium bowl, place the chestnut flour, sugar, salt, and water. Whisk it all together until the batter is smooth and runny.

Oil the sides of a cake pan, then pour the olive oil into it. Put the pan in the oven and let it heat up for a minute.

Remove the pan from the oven and pour the batter into the pan. Swirl the batter and oil together.

(You really do need to do it this way. If you mix the oil into the batter with all the other ingredients and oil the bottom of the pie plate normally, your cake will stick to the pan.)

Sprinkle the spiced apples on top of the batter, then sprinkle on the crystallized ginger. Arrange the chopped chestnuts on top.

Return the cake pan to the oven. Cook for 15 - 25 minutes, until the top is dry and cracked.

I prefer to eat chestnut cake warm or at room temperature. Make sure to refrigerate or freeze leftovers.