

## Cornmeal Pound Cake

This is a delightful pound cake with enough flavor and character to serve solo, but it also plays well with toppings and accompaniments, such as the Blackberries and Peaches in Sweet Basil Syrup. Either way, don't skip the glaze and topping that add bonus bursts of bright citrus flavor and good looks.

There's a standard technique when making pound cakes that you'll see here and can apply to other. Little things can make all the difference, including the type of pan. I prefer a lightweight and light-colored metal pan. Some dark-colored and nonstick pans can make the cake crust too dark and tough.

Makes 8 servings

### Cake

1 cup all-purpose flour  
1/2 cup stoneground cornmeal  
1/4 teaspoon baking soda  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/2 cup butter, at room temperature  
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar  
3 large eggs, at room temperature  
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice  
2 teaspoons lightly packed finely grated lemon zest  
1/2 cup regular sour cream

### Glaze and Topping

1 1/2 cups sifted confectioners' sugar  
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice  
1 tablespoon lightly packed finely grated lemon zest  
1 tablespoon granulated sugar

1. For the Cake: Preheat the oven to 325°F. Grease (preferably with shortening) and flour a 9-by 5-inch loaf pan.
2. Whisk together the flour, cornmeal, baking soda, and salt in a medium bowl for 30 seconds.
3. Beat the butter in a large bowl until creamy with an electric mixer set to medium speed. With the mixer running, gradually add the sugar. Beat on high speed until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes,
4. Add the eggs one at a time, beating only until the batter is smooth after each addition. Beat in the lemon juice and zest.
5. Add half of the flour mixture and stir with a spatula only until the batter is smooth.
6. Stir in the sour cream. Add the remaining flour, and stir only until the batter is smooth.
7. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan. Tap the pan lightly on counter a few times to remove any air bubbles.

8. Bake until a tester inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean, 1 hour to 1 hour 10 minutes. Cool the cake in the pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Turn out the cake and place it top-side up on the rack and let cool to room temperature, about 1 hour.
9. For the Glaze: Sift the confectioners' sugar into a small bowl. Stir in enough lemon juice to make smooth glaze that falls in a wide ribbon from the spoon. Spoon evenly over the top of the cake, letting it drip down the sides.
10. For the Topping: Use fingers to rub together the lemon zest and granulated sugar in a small bowl until the mixture looks shiny and crumbly; sprinkle over the top of the cake.
11. Store the cake at room temperature in an airtight container or wrapped in nonstick foil for up to 2 days.

### **Blackberries and Peaches in Sweet Basil Syrup**

I love the colorful combination of fresh blackberries and peaches in this recipe, but you can substitute other berries and stone fruits. If you happen to have pretty purple basil, use it to make the syrup blush with a rosy hue. Speaking of the syrup, you can reuse it a few times with new supplies of fresh fruit, or you can use it for something else, such as in iced tea, lemonade, or spritzers.

Makes 8 servings

1 cup sugar  
1/2 cup water  
1/2 cup off-dry white wine, such as Riesling  
1 vanilla bean  
1 cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves  
Zest and juice of 1 lemon  
1 pound fresh peaches, peeled, pitted, and sliced (about 2 cups)  
2 cups fresh blackberries

1. Stir together the sugar, water, and wine in a medium saucepan. Split the vanilla bean in half lengthwise with the tip of a knife. Use the tip of the knife to scrape out the seeds, add them to the pan and drop in the bean pod. Bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the basil, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Cool to room temperature. Strain the syrup into a large jar or bowl, pressing on the solids to remove all the liquid.
2. Add the peaches and blackberries, cover, and refrigerate overnight or for up to 5 days; the basil flavor gets stronger each day.

To serve with the Cornmeal Pound Cake: Place slices of cake in shallow serving bowls or soup plates. Spoon the fruit and a little of the syrup and serve before the cake gets soggy.