



SEASONS AT HIGHCLERE



GARDENING, GROWING, AND COOKING THROUGH THE YEAR
AT THE REAL DOWNTON ABBEY

THE COUNTESS OF CARNARVON

RIZZOLI
LONDON

Pineapple Cake with Vanilla Icing

Christopher Columbus landed in America and one of the first meals he and his crew ate included a pineapple. The taste and delicious fragrance so excited them that its fame travelled back to Europe. It proved challenging fruit to grow in the northern climes, though John Evelyn, the diarist, notes that one of the first pineapples was sent to Oliver Cromwell. Over time the Dutch developed the correct process – they needed an underfloor oven to heat the greenhouse which should be sloping south-facing glass.

From 1750 until the twentieth century pineapples became a status symbol in any fashionable country house as a testament to the owner's wealth and to his gardener's skill and experience.

INGREDIENTS

250g (9oz) plain flour
400g (14oz) caster sugar
2 tsp bicarbonate of soda
2 eggs
1 tsp vanilla extract
300g (10oz) pineapple,
fresh or tinned,
approx. 1–2cm (½–¾ inch) cubes

For the icing

225g (8oz) cream cheese
110g (4oz) butter, melted
190g (7oz) icing sugar
1 tsp vanilla extract
Dash of lemon juice (optional)

PREPARATION TIME 15 mins **COOKING TIME** 30 mins plus cooling **SERVES** 6

Preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/Gas mark 4.

Grease an oblong 20 × 20cm (8 × 8 inch) cake tin and line with baking paper.

In a large bowl, mix together the flour, sugar and bicarbonate of soda. Make a well in the centre and add the eggs, vanilla and diced pineapple. Mix well and pour into the tin.

Bake for 30 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the cake comes out clean.

To make the icing, beat together the cream cheese, butter, icing sugar and vanilla until it is creamy. If you like it to be slightly less sweet, add a dash of lemon juice. Spread on a warm but not hot cake.

As this cake contains fruit, it is best stored in the fridge – the flavours will only improve with time!

