



walnut-orange cake with honey syrup

MAKES one 8-inch square or round cake; 9 pieces • **PREP:** 30 minutes • **COOK:** 30 minutes •
FALL-WINTER

What is your concept of a healthy cake? Is there such a thing? I say, there is. This recipe is my version of a sugar-free, dairy-free, wholesome pastry, and once you taste it, it might make you want another piece . . . or two.

I love creating healthier versions of favorite desserts, and this recipe is one attempt at doing so. Years ago, my friend Melanie from Greece introduced me to karidopita, a syrupy walnut cake. In her vegan version, she uses olive oil as the fat, dried apricot puree and raw sugar to sweeten the cake, and sugar and honey to sweeten the syrup. In my “Ayurvedized” version, I omit the sugar altogether and add the honey after cooking the flavored syrup. According to Ayurveda, heat turns honey toxic. So don’t cook with it.

This cake brings back so many memories of growing up in Bulgaria and loving the Greek and Turkish pastries soaked in sugar-sweet syrup, such as tulumba, kadaifi, baklava, and more. Ah, how good those were! I tasted them again the last time I visited my family in my hometown of Plovdiv, but I was disappointed. The refined white flour and sugar, vegetable oils, and additives not only spoiled the taste but also made the pastries very unhealthy.

If you’re a fan of syrupy desserts, try this wholesome option. Succulent, not too sweet, and with an unexpected crunch of walnuts, this cake is satisfying and grounding. Its rustic look reminds one of home. One piece will

quiet down your Vata and Pitta and keep your Kapha happy—perfect for the cool season. If your Pitta is too high, replace the honey with maple syrup.

CAKE

- ½ cup (88 grams) chopped (½-inch pieces) dried apricots
- ¾ cup boiling hot water
- ¼ cup olive oil, plus more for greasing the baking dish
- 2 cups (218 grams) sifted einkorn flour or 1¾ cups (220 grams) sifted spelt flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon fine lime zest
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup fresh orange juice, from 2 to 3 oranges (before squeezing the oranges, zest their peel for the garnish—see Notes)
- 1 cup (113 grams) coarsely chopped walnuts

HONEY SYRUP

- Peel of ½ orange, thinly sliced
- 1 cinnamon stick (2¾ inches long)
- 2 dried apricots, chopped
- ½ cup raw honey
- ¼ cup fresh orange juice (strained for pulp)
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice (strained for pulp)
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

CONTINUED

GARNISHES

¼ cup toasted and shaved walnuts
(see Notes)

Thin orange peel curls (see Notes)

To make the cake:

1. Put the chopped apricots in a blender and pour the boiling water over them. Let them sit for 15 minutes to hydrate. Blend to a smooth puree.

2. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Grease an 8-inch round or square baking dish (a glass Pyrex dish works well) with olive oil.

3. While the apricots are soaking, in a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, cinnamon, cloves, baking soda, lime zest, and salt.

4. In a medium bowl, whisk together the apricot puree, olive oil, and orange juice.

5. Add the wet mixture to the dry mixture, and stir a few times, until the sticky batter is well incorporated. Fold in the walnuts.

6. Transfer the batter to the greased baking dish. Bake for about 30 minutes, until a toothpick or skewer inserted in the middle of the cake comes out clean. While the cake is baking, prepare the syrup and garnishes. Let the cake completely cool off in the baking dish before transferring it to a cutting board or a serving platter. You may also leave it in the baking dish.

To make the honey syrup:

7. In a small saucepan, combine ¾ cup water, the orange peel, cinnamon stick, and apricots, and bring to a boil over high heat; lower the heat and simmer uncovered for 10 minutes.

8. Remove the orange peel and cinnamon stick, and let the cooked apricots cool down to a warm temperature (not higher than 120°F). Transfer to a blender and blend to a smooth, slightly thick consistency. (If there are any little pieces of fruit left, strain them away.)

9. Pour the blended mixture into a small bowl and whisk in the honey, orange juice, lime juice, and vanilla.

To assemble the cake:

10. Cut the cake into triangle-, square- or diamond-shaped pieces of your desired size.

11. Gradually pour the syrup over the cake, making sure to moisten each of the crevices, edges, and corners. (See Notes if you're not going to serve all cake pieces at once.)

12. Garnish the cake with shaved walnuts and thin curls of orange peel. Serve within 2 hours.

NOTES: If you're not going to serve all the cake pieces at once, pour the syrup and add the garnishes to only the number of pieces you want to serve right now. Refrigerate the rest of the syrup and garnishes until your next serving. Store the remaining cake covered, at room temperature.

To shave the toasted walnuts for garnish, use halved walnuts, and grate them on the small holes of a grater.

To make orange peel curls, use a zester or a julienne peeler to peel off thin strips of orange peel, then soak the strips in a cold-water bath and freeze until you're ready to use them. (It takes at least 45 minutes for the peels to curl.)



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