

Our State eats

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Appalachian Apple Stack Cake

Yields: 12 to 16 servings.

Dried Apple Filling:

- 1 pound (4 to 5 packed cups) dried unsulphured apples
- 1 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon ground mace or nutmeg

4 to 5 cups water, divided

Cake Layers:

- 5 cups all-purpose flour, plus more as needed
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ⅔ cup vegetable shortening
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup sorghum molasses
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup well-shaken buttermilk

For the filling: Place the apples, brown sugar, cinnamon, ginger, and mace in a large saucepan. Add enough water to cover. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce the heat to low, and let simmer, stirring frequently, until the apples are tender and the filling is very thick, about 1 hour. If the mixture gets dry, add more water. If it is soupy, continue to simmer until the excess cooks away. Use a potato masher to break up the apples into chunky sauce. Set aside.

For the cake layers: Preheat the oven to 350°. Grease and flour two 9-inch cake pans. You will be baking the layers in batches, for a total of six layers. (Alternatively, you can bake the layers one at a time in a greased and floured, well-seasoned cast-iron skillet, which is the traditional technique. Yet another option is to pat the dough into six 9-inch rounds and bake them on cookie sheets lined with parchment paper.

Whisk together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl.

In another large bowl, beat the shortening, sugar, and molasses with an electric mixer set to medium speed until the mixture is smooth and creamy.

Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition.

Add the flour mixture in thirds, alternating with half of the buttermilk. The mixture should be the consistency of cookie dough, so knead the dough together with your hands if that works better than the mixer. Add a bit more flour if needed.

Pour the dough onto a lightly floured work surface. Divide the dough into six equal pieces. Wrap each piece in plastic wrap so it won't dry out. Use lightly floured hands to pat a piece of dough evenly into the bottom of the prepared cake pans. The dough should be about ½-inch thick. Lightly prick the dough all over with a fork, making a pretty pattern if you wish. Bake until the layers are firm when lightly



pressed, about 15 minutes. The layers do not rise as they bake.

Turn out the first layer onto a large cake plate. Immediately spread it with one-fifth of the apple filling (about 1 heaping cup). Continue baking, stacking, and topping the warm layers. Leave the top layer bare.

Cover the cake with several layers of plastic wrap and then tea towels, or store it in an airtight cake carrier. Let the cake rest at room temperature for at least two days before cutting.

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