



## A Cake Walk

**C**AKE FOR BREAKFAST! Would anyone argue with the logic in that? Especially a tender, moist lemon olive oil cake. Not long ago, I spent some time walking through Spain on the Camino De Santiago. Each morning, we started our walk before daybreak. Around mid-morning we stopped at a cafe to take our first break to enjoy an espresso and almost always a slice of cake.

Every cafe served their families' version of a buttery moist cake freshly made and dusted with powdered sugar. These treats for breakfast were worth every step of the Camino. Here, I am sharing a version of this Mediterranean cake using the rich flavor of olive oil in place of butter with a punch of flavor from fresh lemon juice and plenty of zest. It's delicious with your morning coffee or any time of day.

For a special addition to this delicious olive oil cake, I am adding a garnish of candied lemon peel. Simmering the thin slices of lemon peel in a syrup made with sugar, vanilla bean, and honey makes them tender and sweet-tart, adding just the right level of balance to the texture and flavor of the olive oil cake. These candied peels are delicious and versatile. Bake them into or use them to garnish cakes and muffins, serve them on crostini, or spoon them over ice cream, cheesecake, pancakes, or yogurt bowls. 



PHOTO: LINDA M. BARRETT PHOTOGRAPHY

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## Lemon Olive Oil Cake



### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup olive oil
- 3 large eggs
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar, plus 2 tbsp for sprinkling the top
- 2 t. vanilla paste (or pure extract)
- 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
- Zest from 3 lemons
- 1 t. salt
- 1/2 t. baking powder
- 1/2 t. baking soda
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole milk
- Powdered sugar for dusting, optional

### METHOD:

Preheat oven to 350F. Prepare a 9" springform pan by greasing the bottom and the sides well. Wrap the outside with foil to prevent leaks.

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the olive oil, eggs, and sugar. Add the vanilla, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Whisk briefly to combine.

Sift together the salt, baking powder, baking soda, and flour. Alternating with the milk, add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients in two batches. Try not to over-mix at this stage, you just want to combine everything until the flour is incorporated.

Pour the batter into the springform pan. Sprinkle 2 T. of granulated sugar evenly over the top.

Bake for 50-55 minutes. The cake should be risen and starting to turn a bit golden brown on the top. Note: ovens vary greatly and you may need to bake your cake longer to get it done in the center. I recommend laying a loose piece of foil over the top of your cake if yours seems to be getting brown towards the end of cooking.

Remove from the oven and cool for about 10 minutes in the pan. Then gently remove the cake from the springform pan and cool completely on a baking rack. When cool, dust the top with powdered sugar, if desired. Enjoy!

## Culinary Note:

For creative substitutions, try this cake recipe with oranges, orange zest, and orange juice instead of lemon. Or, to add depth to the flavor, substitute half the juice with liqueur: For a lemon cake, use Limoncello. For an orange cake use Grand Marnier.

## Candied Lemon Zest



### INGREDIENTS:

- 4 lemons washed
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/2 vanilla bean, split lengthwise and scraped (or 1/2 teaspoon vanilla paste, added at the end)

### METHOD:

With a sharp paring knife remove the ends of the lemon the slice thin strips of just the outer skin of the lemon. Try to avoid any of the white pith which will be bitter. This step can also be done with a sharp vegetable peeler. Slice each strip into julienned thin strands.

Blanche the strands by dropping them into a boiling pot of water. After three minutes remove with a slotted spoon or strainer to an ice bath. It will be easier to set the strainer into the ice water, so all the strands stay together.

Remove the strands. In a medium saucepan, combine the sugar, water, honey, and vanilla pod and scrapings. Bring to a boil over medium heat, swirling occasionally to dissolve the sugar.

Add the strands of lemon zest and shuffle the pan to submerge them. Return the mixture to a simmer, and simmer for 2 minutes, then turn off the heat, cover the pan and let the mixture steep for 15 minutes.

Strain the lemon strands, reserving their syrup, and place the fruit in a heatproof bowl or jar. Return the syrup to the pot and simmer over medium heat, swirling frequently, until it bubbles thickly and reduces to half, for about 5-10 minutes. Pour the syrup over the drained lemon zest and chill until cold. Store in the fridge for up to 2 months.