

# The BEST ever Christmas Cake

Hands-on time: 25mins plus soaking; cooking time: around 3 ½hrs, cuts into 16 slices

250g (9oz) each plump raisins and sultanas  
100g (3 ½oz) dried cranberries or blueberries  
200g (7oz) natural glace cherries, halved  
150g (5oz) roasted Marcona almonds  
200g (7oz) unsalted butter, softened, plus extra for greasing  
200g (7oz) unrefined dark muscovado sugar  
100g (3 ½oz) plain flour  
200ml (7 fl oz) vanilla vodka we used Absolut  
4 medium eggs, beaten

- (1) Put the raisins, sultanas, dried cranberries and cherries into a large bowl. Add the vodka and stir well. Cover and leave to soak for 2-3hrs or overnight.
- (2) Grease and line the base and sides of a 20.5cm (8in) round tin with greaseproof paper.  
Preheat the oven to 150°C (130°C fan) gas mark 2.  
Put the almonds in a food processor and blend lightly until coarsely chopped. Take out 75g (3oz) and blend the remainder until ground.
- (3) Put the butter and sugar in a large mixing bowl and beat with a handheld electric whisk for 2-3mins until light and creamy.  
Gradually whisk in the beaten eggs, adding a little of the flour if the mixture starts to curdle.  
Stir in the ground and chopped nuts and flour.
- (4) Add the soaked fruit mixture into the bowl with any unabsorbed liquid.  
Mix well, then spoon into the prepared tin and level the surface.  
Bake for 3½hrs or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.  
Leave to cool in the tin, then remove and wrap in a double thickness of foil until ready to decorate.

## Tester's tips

- \*If you don't want to buy vanilla vodka, use ordinary vodka and mix in 2tbsp good quality vanilla extract.
- \*Once baked, you can boost the vanilla flavour by dousing the cake with a little extra vodka before wrapping and storing.
- \* Check packets before you buy - go for dried fruit that doesn't contain hydrogenated vegetable oil.
- \* If you don't have a food processor, use 75g (3oz) ready ground almonds and chop 75g (3oz) marcona almonds by hand.