

*Oven Temperature: 350°F.
Baking Time: 55 to 65 Minutes*

Grand Marnier Cake with Chocolate Chips

Serves: 12

INGREDIENTS	MEASURE	WEIGHT	
		ounces	grams
<i>room temperature</i>	<i>volume</i>		
chocolate mini-chips or bittersweet chocolate chopped into 1/4-inch pieces	1/2 cup	3 ounces	85 grams
Grand Marnier	1/4 teaspoon	•	•
cake flour	1 1/2 teaspoons	•	•
3 large eggs	Scant 5 fluid ounces	5.25 ounces	150 grams (out of the shell)
sour cream	1 cup	8.5 ounces	242 grams
orange flower water or vanilla	2 teaspoons	•	8 grams
	1 1/2 teaspoons	•	6 grams
sifted cake flour	2 1/2 cups	8.75 ounces	250 grams
unblanched sliced almonds, toasted, and finely ground	1/2 cup + 1 tablespoon (ground)	2 ounces	60 grams
sugar	1 cup	7 ounces	200 grams
baking powder, preferably Rumford	1 1/2 teaspoons	•	7.5 grams
baking soda	1 teaspoon	•	5 grams
salt	3/4 teaspoon	•	5 grams
grated orange zest	2 tablespoons	•	12 grams
unsalted butter (softened)	1 cup	8 ounces	227 grams
<i>Grand Marnier Syrup:</i>			
sugar	1/2 cup	3.5 ounces	100 grams
orange juice, freshly squeezed	1/4 liquid cup	2 ounces	60 grams
Grand Marnier	1/3 liquid cup	2.75 ounces	80 grams

Equipment: One 9-cup fluted tube pan, sprayed with Baker's Joy or greased and floured.

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

In a small bowl toss the chocolate chips and Grand Marnier until the chips are moistened and shiny. Add the 1 1/2 teaspoons flour and toss until evenly coated.

In a medium bowl lightly combine the eggs, 1/4 cup sour cream, and orange flower water or vanilla.

In a large mixer bowl combine the dry ingredients and orange zest and mix on low speed for 30 seconds to blend. Add the butter and remaining 3/4 cup sour cream. Mix on low speed until the dry ingredients are moistened. Increase to medium speed (high speed if using a hand mixer) and beat for 1 1/2 minutes to aerate and develop the cake's structure. Scrape down the sides. Gradually add the egg mixture in 3 batches, beating for 20 seconds after each addition to incorporate the ingredients and strengthen the structure. Scrape down the sides. Stir in the chocolate chips.

Scrape the batter into the prepared pan and smooth the surface with a spatula. Bake 55 to 65 minutes or until a wire cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean and the cake springs back when pressed lightly in the center. The cake should start to shrink from the sides of the pan only after removal from the oven.

Shortly before the cake is done, prepare the syrup: Heat the sugar, orange juice, and Grand Marnier until the sugar is dissolved. Do not boil. As soon as the cake comes out of the oven, place the pan on a rack, poke the top all over with a wire tester, and brush on 1/2 the syrup. Cool in the pan on the rack for 10 minutes, then invert onto a lightly greased wire rack. Brush with the remaining syrup and cool completely before glazing with chocolate or wrapping airtight.

Understanding

This cake is similar to a basic layer cake with the sour cream providing the liquid. A more significant difference, however, is that 1/2 cup flour is replaced by ground almonds and that 1/2 cup sugar, dissolved in orange juice and Grand Marnier, is added to the cake after baking.

To compensate for the missing 1/2 cup of sugar during baking, the leavening is increased to aerate and tenderize the texture. I like to add tiny chocolate chips to the batter because dark chocolate blends so beautifully with the orange flavor. This cake can support the chips because of both the decrease in sugar and the acid provided by the sour cream. An old baker's trick to suspend ingredients in a batter is to make the batter more acid. The acid coagulates the egg faster, in effect setting the cake's structure before the heavier particles can fall to the bottom. A decrease in sugar also enables the egg to coagulate faster and for the starch in the flour to gelatinize better, also strengthening the structure. Another trick is coating the chips with flour, giving them a rougher surface with which to cling to the batter.

Finished Height: Depends on design of pan.

Store: Airtight, 3 days room temperature, 7 days refrigerated, 2 months frozen. Moisture distributes most evenly one day after baking.

Complementary Adornments: A light dusting of powdered sugar.

Serve: Room temperature.