



Washington Cake is a rich pound cake studded with currants named in honor of George Washington and is a favorite cake baked throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Washington Cake

*1 ¾ lbs Flour, 1 ½ lbs Sugar, ¾ lb Butter, 8 Eggs, 1 pint warm Milk,
1 tea spoonfull of Pearl ash dissolved in French Brandy, 2 lbs Currants
or Raisins, or 1 lb of each, 2 Nutmegs, and 6 Cloves, 1 tea cup Brandy,
^{kind & good}*

1 (10 ounce) box currants
3½ cups flour plus 2 tablespoons
1½ teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon nutmeg
½ teaspoon ground cloves
4 eggs, separated
¾ cup butter

1⅔ cups sugar plus 2 tablespoons
1 cup whole milk, warmed
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
¼ cup brandy
1 teaspoon vanilla, optional

- 1:** Steam currants uncovered over simmering water for 15–20 minutes to soften and plump. This can also be done in a microwave, covering for a minute and allowing to rest for 5 minutes.
- 2:** Remove currents from steamer or microwave and cool to room temperature.
- 3:** Drain and dry currents with paper towels and toss with 2 tablespoons flour.
- 4:** Heat oven to 350 degrees.
- 5:** Butter and flour a 12-cup bundt or tube cake pan.
- 6:** Sift flour, baking powder, and spices together in a bowl.
- 7:** Separate eggs.
- 8:** Place butter and 1⅔ cups sugar in a large bowl and beat until light and fluffy.
- 9:** Beat in egg yolks 2 at a time.
- 10:** Slowly beat in milk alternately with the flour.
- 11:** Place egg whites into a large mixing bowl. Add salt and cream of tartar and beat the egg whites to soft peak stage.
- 12:** Sprinkle the 2 tablespoons sugar over egg whites, beating to incorporate sugar. Whip brandy and vanilla into egg white mixture.
- 13:** Carefully fold currants into batter, followed by the egg whites.
- 14:** Pour batter into the prepared pan. Bake for 60 minutes at 350 degrees, or until cake tests done.
- 15:** Remove from oven and cool for 15 minutes. Invert onto a rack and remove pan.

Makes one cake yielding 12–14 servings

Washington Cake is a solid variation of pound cake heavily studded with the traditional addition of currants. Recipes and its variations date to General Washington's inauguration and remained a favorite until layer cakes became popular in the mid-nineteenth century. Considered identical to Washington Cake is Composition Cake, which Virginia also includes in her receipts. When comparing cake recipes, Virginia's Composition Cake, which she notes as "Tried and Good," is spiced heavily with nutmeg.